

No. 32

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



JACK LIGHTFOOT, ARCHER OR THE STRANGE SECRET AN ARROW REVEALED



BY MAURICE STEVENS

By a strange freak of fate, the arrow fired at a hawk had revealed a tragedy, and the disappearance of the hermit Crabbe was no longer a mystery.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 32.

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JACK LIGHTFOOT, ARCHER;

OR,

The Strange Secret an Arrow Revealed.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Daisy Lightfoot, Lily Livingston, Kate Strawn and Nellie Conner, some of the girls of Cranford.

Phil Kirtland, Jack's former rival, but who just at present was being drawn toward young Lightfoot.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *juu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Brodie Strawn and Wilson Crane, who also knew how to use a bow and arrows to some advantage.

Jubal Marlin, a Yankee boy, with a great ambition to make money.

Crabbe, a strange hermit of the woods.

Wally Waggles, who had a cabin and a bit of a groden where the young Robin Hoods camped.

CHAPTER I.

TWO LETTERS.

"He allus was an onreliable cuss."

The words came from Jubal Marlin, spoken aloud to himself, as he sat in his "office" in one corner of the gym and read over a letter he had just received.

The envelope bore a New England postmark, and it had contained two communications—the letter he was reading and another which lay on the desk with the envelope.

That the reader may know at once just what had drawn that remark from Jubal the letters are given here.

The first ran as follows:

"MR. JUBAL MARLIN.

"DEAR SIR: Before starting to Cranford last spring your uncle writ this letter, which I s'pose he intended to send, but didn't. I have just found it while looking through some of his things. I'm gittin' mighty oneasy

about him, too; for when he started he said he'd go on to New York after seeing you and would then come straight back home. He ain't come yit. I should be pleased to learn if he is still in Cranford.

"Write soon. We are all well.

"SUSAN GARLOCH."

The other letter had been written by Jubal's uncle, and was the one which Susan Garloch referred to:

"DEAR JUBE: I'm goin' to New York. Start to-morrow. On my way there I'm goin' to stop off in Cranford and see you. Been a good while since I seen you. How are you doin' in Cranford? Do you like the place? I hope you are in the way of making a mint of money. There ain't nothing stands by a man like money, as I've always said and always will. Friends may forgit ye, but if you've got money you can git along without 'em. Well, as my pen is pore and my ink is pale, I'll jist say that my love for you will never fale, and close this letter. I'll see you in a few days, and then I'll tell you all about how things are up here.

"Your lovin' uncle,

"JUBAL MARLIN, SR."

But Jubal Marlin, Sr., after writing that letter and then forgetting to send it, had also forgotten, or failed, to visit Cranford; and this was Jube's first intimation that he had ever intended to make such a visit.

"He was allus an onreliable cuss!" was Jubal's comment on this letter.

Then he began to wonder about the singularity of the circumstance.

He pushed back in his chair, as he thought this over.

Why had his uncle failed to return to his home?

It did not seem strange to Jube that he had neglected to visit Cranford, or that he had written the letter and then forgotten to send it; but it was singular that he had not gone back home, and stranger still that the people there had not received a word from him. It seemed to prove, indeed, that Jubal Marlin, Sr., was an "onreliable cuss."

On the table before Jube, as he thus sat and thought, was a handsome bow, and a quiver of arrows. He had placed them there with the intention of going with them down to the ball grounds in a few minutes, where there was to be an archery shoot.

"More'n five months since he writ that letter, and 'twan't never like him tew stay away from home that long. Well, I allus did think he was a little bit teched; and, by granny, that seems tew prove it! Writ tew me an' went away without sendin' me what he'd writ, and then fergot to come tew see me, and failed to go back home! But I don't see why he didn't go back home?

Might have got sick daown in the city, I reckon; er might even have died there."

He drew up to the desk, and taking up his pen he began a letter to Susan Garloch, explaining that his uncle had not visited Cranford, and he did not know where he was.

Having written this, Jubal sealed it, and went with it to the post office, for he wanted it to start at once.

On his way there he passed Phil Kirtland and Brodie Strawn, who, armed with bows and arrows, were on their way down to the ball field.

"Aren't you coming?" Brodie called to him.

"I'll be with ye in jist the shake of a lamb's tail," Jubal shouted, and then hurried on to the post office.

On his way back he saw Lily Livingston, Kate Strawn, Daisy Lightfoot and Nellie Conner driving down in the Strawn family carriage.

He also saw other people moving toward the ball field.

"We'll have a craowd aout," he mused.

The time was afternoon, of a beautiful day in early September, and Cranford Lake looked like a picture, with the deep woods and the blue hills showing beyond it.

Entering the gym and ascending to his "office," Jubal took up his bow and his quiver of arrows, slung the latter over his shoulder, tucked the bow under his arm, placed the two letters in their envelope in his pocket, and came down.

He locked the door of the gym, or rather the door of the lower part which had been an old carriage shop, and dropped the key into his pocket. Jubal was the "janitor."

Then he took his way hurriedly to the ball grounds, for the writing and posting of that letter had made him late.

CHAPTER II.

ARCHERY.

An archery club had been formed by Jack Lightfoot and his associates some time before, and they had done a good deal of practicing with the bow and arrow since.

This afternoon another archery contest, or "shoot," was to be held, at the end of which Jack and several others were to start into the woods on a little outing trip, taking with them their bows and arrows.

When Jubal reached the archery "green" inside the old fair grounds, the contestants were already at it.

What Jubal saw was a quadrangle marked on the

grass with white lines, and at the further end of it an archery target consisting of a flat, circular pad of twisted straw, four feet in diameter and faced with cloth, upon which was a yellow central disk called the "gold." Round this disk of yellow was a band of red, followed by one of blue, then one of black, and lastly one of white.

In archery contests "points" are counted, and that was what the yellow disk and the circles round it were for.

A hit in the gold counts nine, in the red seven, in the blue five, in the black three, and in the white one.

The target was mounted on a tripod, with the "gold" center four feet from the ground, and the distance to be shot over was fifty measured yards.

Nat Kimball had let fly with his arrow and had struck the ground beneath the target, instead of hitting it.

"Wow! you couldn't hit the earth if it was stood up there before you!" shouted Ned Skeen, gayly. "Stand out of the way, you geezer, and let me show you what I can do!"

"But I did hit the earth," said Nat, grinning, though somewhat crestfallen. "If you do any better it will be an accident."

"Stand out of the way, fellows, and give Ned room," cried Jack, laughing at Skeen's humorous boasting. "He's going to tear a hole in the gold so big that you can put your head through it."

Then—Ned actually hit the gold!

"Wow!" he yelled. "Do you see that! Howling mackerels, how is that for shooting?"

"It was an accident," said Kimball; "you couldn't do that again to save your neck!"

"Oh, I couldn't? That's what you say. You go away back and sit down!"

The boy who drew the arrows out of the target, pulled out Ned's and came running back with it.

"A hit in the gold counts nine," said Jack, marking with a pencil on a score card. "Skeen, you're at the head of the class!"

"But he'll not stay there," persisted Nat.

"Oh, I won't? Well, you'll see!"

Kate Strawn's name was called, and she stepped into position, with a beautiful light bow which she had tipped with the Cranford baseball colors, white and blue.

Kate made a handsome picture, as she stood there in her white outing suit, with hat flared back on her forehead, and lifted the ribboned bow for her shot.

"Now, don't laugh, any of you," she begged, "for if you do I shall miss."

"Keep still, everybody!" cried Jack, dramatically.

Kate laughed and let the arrow fall.

But she picked it up, and once more fitted it to her bow.

She lifted the bow, sighted a moment, and the twang of the bowstring sounded.

"Five—in the blue!" Jack shouted. "Good enough!"

He set down the figure opposite Kate's name on the score card.

"Now, Nellie," he said, "it's your turn to play Indian. That's a gold beaver out there, and you're going to bring it down."

"If I thought it was a beaver I couldn't shoot at it."

She, too, was dressed in white, with a blue hat on the coil of her brown hair, and a flush of excitement put roses in her cheeks.

She trembled a little as she lifted the bow, but the trembling ceased as she steadied on the target; then she let the arrow slip.

"Seven!" Jack yelled. "In the red—seven! Now, Miss Lily!"

Lily Livingston tripped forward, smiling and charming, a nut-brown maid of a summer girl, in her white dress and tan shoes, and airy, jaunty manner.

But she did not do as well as either Kate or Nellie, for she put the arrow in the black, and that counted only three.

Then Jubal's name was called.

"By granny, I've had news that's sorter unstrung my nerves tew-day," he declared, "and I dunno whether I can hit anything er not."

"Did somebody leave you a gold mine?" asked Wilson Crane.

"Well, I'll tell yeou 'baout it some other time; jist naow I'm under contract tew bu'st a hole in that yaller."

But Jubal's arrow stuck in the white, and he had but one against his name on the score card.

Thus the shooting went on.

It was fun, and it was good exercise, not only for the muscles, but for the eyes and the hands. It trained one to see accurately, and to judge distances and other things with care.

The fellows had never taken up any light form of amusement that pleased them better, and the fact that the girls could take part in it did not lessen the pleasure, but rather increased it.

Jack's sister, Daisy, who followed Jubal, drove the arrow into the gold; but she laughingly declared that

it was an accident and she knew she could not do it again.

Daisy Lightfoot was as handsome a girl in her way as either Nellie or Kate; in fact, there was one young fellow there that day who thought her the prettiest girl on the grounds. That young fellow was Phil Kirtland. Phil did not always like Jack Lightfoot, but recently he had come to think rather highly of Jack's sister.

After a time of shooting the contest began to narrow down to four persons—Jack, Phil, Tom and Brodie, who were really excellent bowmen.

Of the girls—and more than a dozen Cranford misses took part in the shoot—the leading archers at the end of this time were Nellie Conner and Daisy Lightfoot; with Kate Strawn close behind them, and with still a hope that she could win out against them. Lily and the other girls had fallen so far behind that their chances seemed hopeless.

But the interest of the boys, and of the crowd generally, was now centered on the four young fellows, whose record on the score card had placed them in the lead.

"Bring down the golden eagle again," said Lafe, as Jack stepped into position, "and you've got the thing cinched."

But Jack, though he tried to bring down the "golden eagle," missed it, striking in the red, which counted him but seven.

Brodie Strawn, who was at the moment tied with Jack, struck the gold, and was thus put in the lead.

The shooting went on until it came again the turns of Jack and Brodie.

This time Jack struck the gold, while Brodie's arrow found the blue, and Jack was a little ahead.

Phil and Tom were holding third and fourth places, first one and then the other getting a lead.

When the contest ended Jack had defeated Brodie by a slight margin, Phil had defeated Tom, and Nellie Conner stood fourth as the victor among the girls.

It had been a satisfactory shoot; and when it was over they all went down by the lake shore, where they had a luncheon, with some ice cream.

"Fellows," said Lafe, dipping his spoon into his cream, "here's where I can hit the gold every time."

And there was no doubt that Lafe Lampton "held the belt" when it came to eating any old thing.

"But there's one thing, Lafe," said Jack, laughing, "and I think that's why you're such a favorite—you never chew the rag!"

"That isn't it," Lafe declared, as his face flushed.

"I'm a favorite, especially with the girls, because I always keep my pockets loaded up."

Then he "proved it," by dumping some chocolates and peanuts into the lap of Nellie Conner, who sat on the grass beside him.

"Well," said Jack, finally, rising and looking at the sun that was sinking slowly toward the western woods beyond Laurel River, "all things pleasant must come to an end. I hate to have to say so, but I really think we'd better make our start pretty soon. I've got to go up home first, and these things must be taken back to town."

Less than an hour later Jack and those who were to constitute the archery outing party turned their backs on the town of Cranford and headed toward the wilderness that lay to the westward of the lake along Laurel River.

They carried a few necessities, but not many, and each bore a handsome bow under his arm, and had a quiver of arrows slung over his shoulder.

The party consisted of Jack and Tom Lightfoot, Lafe Lampton, Ned Skeen, Wilson Crane and Jubal Marlin, and they expected to be gone from home nearly a week.

CHAPTER III.

A TASTE OF CAMP LIFE.

Shortly after sunset Jack and his friends were in camp for the night on the shore of Laurel River, a small stream which came down from the hills and emptied into the western end of Cranford Lake.

Here, over a fire built of dry brushwood, Lafe Lampton began the first evening meal, for by his own choice Lafe was camp cook.

The other boys busied themselves in getting the camp ready for the night, by cutting hemlock boughs and framing them over ridge poles in the shape of tents or slanting them up against supporting poles that rested against trees.

Each "tent" was to accommodate two members of the party; and for their bedding they had brought for each two persons one woolen and one rubber blanket. When forced to sleep in a damp place the rubber blanket could be placed under them; or in the event of a rain that would beat through the hemlock boughs or other protection the rubber blanket could be put over them. The one woolen blanket would ordinarily be enough for covering; but if they encountered cool or cold nights they could "double up," and so have more than one blanket for two.

In addition to these blankets, they carried two light hatchets, a frying pan, and a coffeepot, and each boy carried a collapsible drinking cup which would go in a pocket. They used their knives in eating—"ate with fingers instead of forks"—and for plates had clean strips of birch bark, which were thrown away after use.

Thus it can be seen that they traveled light, having nothing else for burdens but their bows and arrows and a very small supply of provisions. They did not take much in the way of food, for they knew that they could find farmhouses here and there where they could purchase things and even get a meal occasionally if they desired. At these farmhouses they could also get eggs and milk and butter, and a fat chicken or two, if their bows and arrows failed to bring down game or their luck at fishing failed them.

All the young fellows were in a jovial mood, even to Jubal, who had told his story and shown his letters, and thus had relieved his mind somewhat of that matter.

On the floors of the green tents of hemlock boughs and poles hemlock browse was piled for beds, making odorous couches.

Whenever hemlock could not be had the boys expected, if the weather remained warm and dry, to sleep on the rubber blankets placed on the dry earth, with the woolen blankets over them, if these were needed.

They did not intend to sleep in a house while they were gone, if it could be avoided. Of course, if a storm came on they might be glad enough to seek the shelter of a house, or even of an old barn, or abandoned shanty of any kind.

But the weather promised to be favorable—warm and dry, just ideal weather for camping.

"By granny, this is something like livin'!" said Jubal, as he hacked at the hemlock with one of the hatchets. "Seems tew me sometimes I'd like tew go aout intew the woods and play hermit fer the rest of my natcherel days."

"But you'd want some one with you," suggested Skeen.

"Well, yes, it wouldn't be bad tew have some company."

"Then you wouldn't be a hermit."

"And I'd want to keep close to some farm where there were plenty of milk and eggs and good chickens for frying," observed Lafe, who overheard this as he worked round his fire.

"And an ice cream parlor and a soda fountain not too far away wouldn't be bad," Wilson Crane added.

"And a little library where a fellow could get books now and then, and a post office or something where he could receive magazines and papers and such things," said Tom.

Jack laughed as he listened to these wishes and comments.

"In spite of the bows and arrows we're only imitation Indians," he said. "I like to get out into the woods and go wild for a little while, but I'm as glad as the next one to get back into the town again after I've had my fun."

But perhaps that only showed how thoroughly Jack understood what the pleasures of the camp life consist in. We enjoy it because it is such a contrast to our ordinary method of living, but we should hesitate a long time before being willing to adopt it as a regular mode of existence. When the outing is over and we get back home the comforts of home are more thoroughly appreciated because of the contrast. Camp life has its joys in plenty, but it has also some discomforts; which are really not discomforts, however, to a hardy lad.

The camp was made by the time Lafe had the supper ready; and then all sat round on the river bank, with the flashing fire shining red in the tumbling water; and, "with fingers for forks," aided by their pocket-knives, they devoured the things which Lafe's cooking skill had prepared.

They sat up after supper a long time, talking over their plans.

Then, as the night remained so warm, with no hint of dew, they dragged bags of hemlock browse out into the open air and made their couches there, and lay down to sleep under the bright stars and with the sound of the gurgling river in their ears.

They were all tired and they slept well.

It seemed to Jack that he had been asleep but a little while, when he was awakened by an excited whisper from Ned Skeen, and, opening his eyes, saw the red fire of the morning sun shining high in the eastern sky, showing that full sunrise was not far away.

Ned Skeen's question was followed by the twang of his bowstring, and a cry of some kind came from the underbrush near.

Jack rolled out of his hemlock bed, and all the boys started up. Ned was on his feet, looking into the woods.

"Howling mackerels! it was a wild cat or a panther, or something like that!" he declared. "He was close up by the camp when I heard him. Then he scudded and I let drive with an arrow."

"And I'll bet yeou've lost yer arrer," said Jubal.

"But I drove him away, just the same."

"Better put on your shoes," Jack warned, as Ned was about to dart out to the spot where he had seen the animal he had shot at; "you may cut your feet and go lame for the rest of the trip."

Ned was almost too excited to obey this, but he did; and by the time he was ready Jack and the other boys had slipped into their clothing and had drawn on their shoes.

"He was right there," said Ned, leading the way and palpitating with interest.

He pointed to the spot at which he had aimed his arrow."

"By granny, yeou must have druv it clean through him!" Jubal ejaculated.

The arrow was sticking in the body of a tree near the ground, and there was no indication that it had gone through or hit anything but the tree.

Ned stared.

"Well, if I didn't hit him, what made the thing scream?"

"Ned," said Tom, "I've been thinking all the time that wasn't a scream, but a yelp—the yelp of a frightened dog. It must have been a dog."

"A dog—nit! Didn't I see the shine of his eyes—they looked green, a kind of red-green."

"A dog's eyes would look that way the same as any other animal's, and I suppose their reddish shine was from the red of the sun in the sky."

Ned was not willing to believe that the thing he had shot at was only a dog.

"But there aren't any houses near here!" he protested.

"That doesn't prove it wasn't a dog. It was probably a hound that had been out hunting, and he came nosing round the camp to get something to eat."

Proof that Tom's theory was the correct one was found when they went a little further and there found some damp, boggy ground which showed the tracks of a dog clearly enough.

But Ned refused to be convinced.

"I still don't think it was a dog," he declared; "how do you know it wasn't a panther, or some other animal like that?"

"Because there aren't any panthers round here."

"How do you know there aren't?"

"None have been seen for years."

"Well, it might have been one that had escaped from somewhere, you know; or, perhaps, a jaguar that had escaped, or something of the kind. I read

in the papers last summer of a jaguar that escaped from a menagerie out in Colorado, and they had fun in getting him again."

Ned was loath to give up the idea that he had shot at something more wonderful and romantic than a common dog.

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEER STRANGER.

When breakfast was over, the hastily constructed camp was abandoned just as it stood, and with each boy bearing his portion of the camping outfit and provisions they set out again, heading toward the blue hills that lay over behind the woods.

It was noon when they reached them, and found a fine view of the woods when they had climbed up some distance. They could see the lake and the town of Cranford, both seeming very far away and small.

In passing through the woods they had done some hunting, and had three gray squirrels, which Lafe was to cook for dinner. The squirrel law was off now. They had also stirred up several partridges. They might have brought down more game, but they did not care to risk the loss of any arrows by shooting where there was not a good chance.

A rabbit bounced out of a clump of bushes, and Wilson Crane let an arrow fly at it. Jubal sent a second; but the rabbit went off unharmed, and the boys hunted for their arrows.

"That would have helped out on the dinner," said Lafe, regretfully. "I believe I could eat these three little squirrels myself."

But the three squirrels were enough, with some of the supplies they had brought from the town.

The boys had now reached the region in which they purposed to spend most of their time.

There were squirrels in the woods, partridges in the brushy districts, rabbits everywhere, and quails round the grain fields of the scattered farms. Besides, the Laurel River, to whose banks they still clung, was well stocked with fish. They were not likely to go hungry, for they knew that two or three miles away were some farmhouses, where they could buy things if their supplies ran out.

When dinner was over another camp was built.

Then the boys lay around, resting and talking a while, and finally scattered to look over the surrounding country, that they might better determine their plans for the future.

It was four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and

Jack Lightfoot was walking along some high rocky cliffs that overhung the little river, with the water thundering and dancing below him in a wild, frothing stream, when he found himself suddenly opposed in the path by an unkempt individual, who carried on his arm a long-barreled, big-bored rifle.

This rather wild-looking man had evidently been waiting for Jack there, for he slid down from some rocks and placed himself in front of him.

Jack stopped in hesitation.

"Hello!" he said, by way of striking up a conversation. "This is rather pretty up here, don't you think?"

The man plumped the butt of his rifle down on the rocks, folded his hands across the muzzle and stared hard at Jack without answering.

Finally he asked what seemed to Jack a singular question:

"Is your name Jubal Marlin?"

"No," said Jack; "what made you think so?"

"You're campin' over there?"

The man jerked his head in the direction of the camp.

"Yes."

"A half dozen of ye?"

"Yes, that's the number."

"Come frum Cranford?"

"Yes."

"What you doin' there?"

"Just camping."

"What fer?"

"Why, just for the fun of the thing, of course."

"That all?"

"That's all."

"You're a liar!"

The man had removed his clasped hands from the muzzle of the rifle.

"Sorry you think so," Jack answered, wondering if he was going to have trouble with this fellow.

"Yes, you're a liar. Your name's Jubal Marlin!"

He came close up to Jack, peering with little gray eyes that were sharp and cunning.

"If you'll let me go by," said Jack, "I'll not trouble you."

He moved to one side to pass the man, for he did not relish the thought of an encounter with him on those high bluffs overhanging the river.

The cunning eyes dropped craftily.

"Oh, well, if ye say it's so I got to believe you, I s'pose!"

He stepped aside as if to let Jack pass; then as

Jack moved along he lunged at him, dropping the rifle with a clatter to the rocks.

Jack avoided his outstretched hands, and with a quick kick of one foot tripped him sprawling; then ran on along the bluffs, stopping when he was some distance away.

What he saw as he turned round made him duck behind a tree. The man had caught up the long rifle and was aiming it at him.

Jack's quick leap caused the man to lower the weapon, for Jack had thus taken himself out of sight.

A fight with a man who was armed with a rifle and would not hesitate to use it was not to Jack's taste, and he hurried on down the slope, interposing trees and rocks between himself and his unknown enemy.

At the end of this sharp flight he found himself panting from his exertions and stopped. Then he climbed cautiously to the top of the nearest rock and looked over it, but the man was not to be seen.

It would have been mere foolhardiness for him to go back up the slope for the purpose of discovering what had become of the man, as the latter might be in hiding, waiting for him to come in sight and in range of his bullet. Jack was a boy of courage, but he was also a boy of discretion.

So he slipped down from the rocks and turned in the direction of the camp, feeling that he had had an adventure that would spice the talk of the evening round the camp fire.

When Jack reached the camp Ned Skeen came out to meet him.

Ned was so much excited he could hardly speak.

"I've stayed in camp about all afternoon," he said, "and I've had the scare of my life! My hair hasn't turned white, has it?"

He tried to laugh, but he was apparently very nervous.

"Your hair's holding its natural color, I believe. What's happened?"

"Well, there's a queer fellow wandering round here, and I think he's crazy. He carries a big cannon of a rifle, and once I thought he was going to shoot me with it. I was the last to leave the camp, and I met him right out there. He asked me what my name was, and when I told him he acted as if he doubted me.

"I came back to the camp, for I didn't like the looks of him; and then I saw him prowling round out there staring at the camp.

"By and by, when I thought he'd gone away, I heard a footstep right behind me. It made me jump; and when I turned round—well, howling mackerels!

that fool was right there, with his gun pointed at me. I nearly threw a fit.

"Tell me your true name!" he said, in a sort of ice-cream voice that sent the shivers galloping up my spine.

"And when I told him he looked again as if he didn't believe me. But he went away; and I've been here ever since, waiting for some of you fellows to come back. Gee! I'm in favor of moving camp, for I know he's crazy! You didn't see anything of him as you came along?"

"Yes, I saw him," said Jack.

And then he sat down and told Ned of his own encounter with the same individual.

Half an hour later Jubal arrived, with a story as startling.

His clothes were torn, and he looked as if he had been mixed up in a dog fight.

"By granny, I come nigh abaout bein' killed!" he shouted.

"You saw him?" said Skeen. "You had a fight with him?"

"Well, I dunno who yeou're talkin' abaout, but I run acrost the gol-darndest critter, carryin' a big gun. His face was all covered with whiskers—hadn't shaved fer six months, I reckon. I was walkin' along, lookin' fer squirrels down in the woods, when f'ust I seen him. I thought he was lookin' fer squirrels, tew.

"Seen any squirrels, mister?" I ast him, as he come up tew me.

"Instead of answerin', he looked at me with eyes like shiny, agate marbles; and he says:

"Tell me whut's yer name?"

"Jubal Marlin," says I, as perlite as I knowed haow.

"Well, I vum, if the critter didn't jump fer me then like a squallin' tomcat!

"I jumped back, tew git aout of the way; and when he struck his foot agin' a root and fell sprawlin', I cut sticks aout of there, naow I tell yeou."

"And you didn't see him again?" Jack asked, almost as excited now as Ned.

"I seen him onct—seen him swing up t'at gol-darned big rifle an' p'int it at me; and then I went over a rock like a rabbit and scudded fer here. Tore my clo'es some, tew, doin' it."

Jube's eyes were fairly rolling.

"That's the fellow," cried Skeen, "the very same one; he wanted to shoot me here, and he tackled Jack! He wanted to know what my name was, and he told Jack he believed *he* was Jubal Marlin. Now what does that mean?"

"What in time kin it mean?" Jubal demanded, starting round into the woods as if he expected to see the queer rifleman out there behind a tree.

Jack got up and walked to the edge of the woods, finally mounting a slight knoll that stood in the open before the camp. He had been made uneasy.

"I don't know what to think of it," he said, as he came back. "Likely the fellow is crazy."

"Crazy as a water bug!" said Skeen.

"I had a theory, but what Jube says has almost knocked it out."

"What was that?"

"What did I say tew change it?"

Jack sat down again, but kept his keen eyes on the woods and on the stony, brushy country that stretched toward the nearest hill.

"My theory was simply that as the man asked for Jubal Marlin he might be that uncle of Jube's who was to have come to Cranford; but that can't be so, for Jube has seen him."

"Howling mackerels, I hadn't thought of that! It couldn't have been your missing uncle, Jube? He might have gone crazy, you know; and that would account for him not appearing in Cranford."

"He might 'a' gone crazy," said Jube, "but could he have sprouted whiskers like that? Yes, I s'pose he could, in six months; and that would change his looks. He allus went clean shaved, and he allus wore purty good clo'es. This feller was a ragamuffin."

"Could it have been him?" Jack asked.

"It don't seem posserble."

"But how did he know your name?"

All three got up and stepped out beyond the camp, looking about, thus showing their uneasiness.

"My uncle was allus noted fer bein' an onreliable cuss," said Jubal, "which accaounts fer his not comin' tew see me an' not mailin' that letter after he'd writ it, but it don't accaount fer the sing'lar fact that he didn't go back home. That's been puzzlin' me ever sense I heerd abaout it. It'd be mighty sing'lar if this hairy, ragged critter was him. It don't seem tew me that I can believe it."

As Jack and Jubal had encountered the man some distance away, it was not likely that he could now be near the camp, unless he had followed Jubal.

Nevertheless, the boys continued to watch the woods and the rocky slopes, until Tom and Lafe and Wilson came in.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAMP HAS A VISITOR

As a result of these encounters with the queer rifleman the boys moved camp that evening, and established themselves some distance away.

Here in a crevice Lafe fried the fish he had caught that day, and the game which the other boys had secured.

Tom had brought down a plump partridge, which flew up from the ground and stopped on the limb of a small tree, giving him a good shot with the bow and arrow.

And Wilson had two rabbits. One he had discovered sitting in a bunch of grass, and the other he had found squatting in the brushy growth of the hillside. Both he had killed easily with his arrows.

It was "pot hunting," but as the boys were armed with nothing but their bows, they could not afford to take the chances of trying to bring down game that was flying or running, as one may do if he is out hunting with a shotgun.

The abundance of fish and game made Lafe's "mouth water," as he put it. The boys helped him to prepare them for cooking, and Lafe desired no more assistance than that. He wanted to attend to the cooking himself, for then he would know that nothing was burned or underdone, and that the business would be performed properly.

"I don't know but I'd like to be a chef in a big hotel somewhere," he remarked, as he busied himself about the fire. "They get whaling big salaries, and the work must be just fun."

"Fun for you, perhaps," observed Jack, "but I shouldn't fancy it."

"Oh, of course," said Lafe, laughing as he poked at his fire, "you're not expected to know a good thing when you see it!"

Jubal was almost too serious-minded to talk.

And Ned Skeen was taking no part in the conversation. He had constituted himself the "watchdog" of the party, and was sitting well out in front of the camp, with his back against a tree and his eyes roving about.

He didn't want that man to come up behind him again and poke a rifle at him. That had given Ned a nervous turn which he would not be able to get over for a week.

As Ned sat thus on guard there was a crackling of underbrush which fairly made him jump, and a man came into view.

Ned breathed a sigh of relief, even though he did

not like the appearance of the visitor, who was not the queer rifleman, but a greasy-looking, round-bodied individual, with a flat, greasy face.

"Howdy!" he called, waving his hand as if he were a big fish wiggling a fin; and with this salutation he walked toward the fire.

All the boys started up when they saw and heard him.

Ned's first thought was that this might be Jube's missing uncle; but he soon saw he was again mistaken, for apparently Jubal did not know the man.

"Seen yer camp fire," said the visitor, dropping his greasy form to the ground, "an' thought I'd come in an' be friendly."

He looked hungrily at the things Lafe was cooking.

"My name's Waggles," he said, when no one showed joy at his intrusion—"Wally Waggles. When I was younger I was called Walter Waggles, but I've cut that out, and now I'm jest Wally Waggles. Glad to see ye."

He put his broad back against a tree and beamed amiably.

"You live round here, I suppose?" Jack asked now.

"I guess your name ought to be Weary Waggles," thought Lafe, poking viciously at the fire to relieve his feelings, and wondering anxiously if the man would expect supper, and how much would be left of the fish and game after he got through with it.

"Well, yes; ye may say that I do—'bout a mile from here, er mebbe more, over on the road that leads west from the lake. I'm livin' alone there. I dis-kivered that you youngsters was in the neighborhood, and so I thought I'd drop in, sort of friendly like, ye know."

Again he looked hungrily at the things Lafe was cooking.

"Oh, I wish you'd move on back home!" thought Lafe as he caught that look.

"This afternoon," said Jack, "some of my friends and myself met a queer fellow out near here, and maybe you can tell us who he is. He had a bushy, overgrown beard, carried a long rifle, and was fairly ragged."

"Had a wild look," supplemented Skeen, who had come into the group and was surveying the stranger with interest.

Wally Waggles leaned heavily back against the tree and gurgled out a laugh.

"Well, that's a relief to me! That must have been Crabbe. There's been a feller round here that we call the hermit Crabbe, but ain't nobody seen him in a

month of Sundays. Most folks thought he was dead, mebbe."

"Was he crazy?" asked Ned.

"No, he wa'n't crazy, as anyone knowed on, 'ceptin' that I reckon any feller that lives alone in the woods must be a little bit cracked. I'm bettin' that was Crabbe!"

His manner changed when Jack told what had befallen Ned and Jubal and himself.

"Then he's gone crazy," said Wally Waggles. "I snum, I don't want to meet him!"

"You ain't met any feller callin' hisself Jubal Marlin?" Jube asked, anxiously.

"Never heard the name before."

The supper was ready.

"I reckon I'll lay to with ye," observed the greasy stranger, thus inviting himself. "I snum, I ain't seen sich vittles fer a month o' Sundays."

And he "lay to," with such an enormous appetite that Lafe felt like beating him over the head with the stick he had been using as a poker for the fire.

Wally Waggles did not stop eating until the last bone of the game and fish had been picked clean and the last drop of coffee had been drained from the little coffeepot.

"Eatin' out doors is healthy fer the appetite," he observed, sagely.

He drew out a black pipe, pushed a handful of tobacco into it, and set it going; then looked round at the gathering darkness.

"I don't like the idee of goin' home, with that crazy critter wanderin' round. I don't know who he is, an' he might take a fool notion that I'm Jubal Marlin an' try fer a crack at me. But how d'ye reckon he ever heerd that name, if he ain't this young feller's uncle or akin to him?"

"That's what I'm wantin' tew know tarnal bad," said Jubal.

"You're that cellerbrated, I reckon, that even a hermit in the wild woods has heerd of ye."

Waggles tried to laugh, and looked round again into the thickening gloom.

"I'll accompany you home, if you're afraid to go alone," said Jack, who wanted to get rid of him."

"I think I'll go along, then," remarked Tom, getting to his feet, for he distrusted this greasy stranger.

"Well, of all the hogs!" said Lafe, as the man disappeared with his escort; "why, actually, the fellow can eat more than I can!"

Then Lafe pretended not to see the joke, when the fellows laughed at him.

"But I'm anxious," said Skeen, moving about nervously. "What if Tom and Jack don't come back—what if something happens to them? Why didn't they make him go home alone? This has been such a queer day that I'm getting nervous."

The boys laughed again, for Ned was always nervous.

"He wouldn't have gone home alone; he'd have stayed overnight," said Lafe. "And what would we have fed him with in the morning? Jack wanted to get rid of him."

Ned Skeen walked round outside of the camp with his bow and arrows, watching.

But Jack and Tom came back after a while, declaring that they had found Greasy Waggles highly interesting.

"I didn't find him interesting," Lafe grumbled. "Look at that pile of bones! And the bread is all gone, and everything else that we had cooked."

He shook the cracker bag, and a few lonely crackers rattled round in it.

"Fellows, we'll be up against starvation to-morrow!"

"We'll prevent that," said Jack, "by getting a move on us in the morning and doing some hunting and fishing that is worth while. And if we have no luck, we can go over to one of the farmhouses and buy what we've got to have."

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT AN ARROW REVEALED.

Though nothing was seen or heard of the strange rifleman throughout the night, when the boys started out the next morning to do some hunting they resolved to keep together.

Jubal had not slept well, and he seemed tired and anxious.

The breakfast that morning was rather scanty. They put themselves on a short allowance of bread, for they wanted it to last as long as possible. As for game and fish there was none, thanks to the healthy appetite of Greasy Waggles.

Ned Skeen seemed to be looking more for the rifleman than for game, for when a squirrel ran up a tree beside him he did not see it until he heard the other fellows shout.

Tom Lightfoot brought it down with an arrow.

Five more squirrels were added to the bag that morning.

One of these was secured by Jack, who also brought down a partridge.

Wilson Crane got another rabbit; and as this was Wilson's third rabbit they began to call him "the rabbit dog."

"Oh, we're all right again!" Lafe declared, buoyantly, as he viewed the increasing bag of game. "I know where we can get a lot of fish, and that will fix us. We won't have to visit any farmhouses to-day."

Being tired of the hunting, they adjourned to the banks of the river, and were soon pulling in fish, meeting with such fine luck that in less than an hour they had more than two dozen speckled beauties to show for their work.

Jubal, who was having the poorest success of all, for his mind was not really on the fishing, got up and walked along the bank looking for a better place.

As he did so a rifle cracked somewhere in the woods, and Jubal fairly fell forward, while a characteristic exclamation was bellowed from his lips.

Jack dropped his willow pole and scrambled toward Jubal, his first thought being that his friend had been shot.

But he was relieved to see Jubal straighten up with a nervous laugh.

"By hemlock, I thought I was a goner! Yeou heerd that gun, didn't ye? Well, the bullet frum it went spang intew that tree right by my head. There it is!"

Instead of straightening up to his full height, cautious Jubal gave a squirming leap now that took him well down the bank.

"Better git daown frum there," he warned. "That crazy feller has opened up on us with his rifle."

Seeing that Jubal was unhurt, Jack climbed cautiously to the top of the nearest bluff and looked off into the woods from which the rifle shot must have come.

Though he saw nothing, he knew that the rifleman was out there somewhere.

Jubal and the others were staring up at him and waiting for his report. All had taken up their bows and arrows, and had abandoned their fishing.

"Couldn't see anything," Jack reported, as he slipped back from his post of observation. "Was that an accident, or do you think he shot at you with the intention of hitting you?"

"He shot at me with a bullet, by cracky! Seems tew me I can hear it singin' in my ears yit. It didn't miss my head by more'n an inch."

"Stay here," said Jack. "Tom, you go round that way, while I go round this. Keep low, and your eyes open. Maybe we can get to see that fellow."

"What's the use o' lookin'?" Jubal grumbled. "I know who shot that bullet at me."

But Tom and Jack slipped away.

When they returned they were able to report that they had seen the rifleman moving off hurriedly through the woods at a considerable distance.

This was a relief; for they could feel now that for a time at least no more bullets would be fired at them.

It was clear to Jack that the man had shot at Jubal from a certain high knoll which commanded that point on the river bank. Whether he had recognized Jubal, or had merely fired not caring which member of the party was the target, was uncertain; yet Jack and Tom, and Jubal himself, were of the opinion that the man had aimed at Jubal.

"By hemlock, I'm fer gittin' aout of this place!" declared Jubal, thrown into a panic by his narrow escape from a sudden death. "If the crazy critter shoots at me onc't there's no sayin' but he'll dew it ag'in the fust chance he gits. I'm fer back-trackin'. I'm a peaceable citizen, killin' things fer fun and fer food; but I ain't hankerin' tew be killed myself."

He tried to laugh, but the effort was not a success. In fact, Jube had been scared, and his white face showed it. The mystery of the thing was also wearing on his nerves.

"We ought to be able to tell if that bullet came from a big-bored rifle, such as that fellow carries," said Jack.

Saying this, he took one of the hatchets and began to chop into the tree for the bullet.

He brought it up in a little while.

It was a large bullet, from a big-bored gun; and this seemed sufficient proof, if added proof was needed, that it had been fired by the rifleman.

There was no further desire for fishing, and it was decided now to return to the camp.

On the way back Jack saw a large hawk swoop down and hover over a rabbit.

The rabbit escaped by some quick running and twisting, and the disappointed hawk soared into a tree and alighted.

"Fellows," Jack whispered, "I think I'll try an arrow on that rascal!"

He slipped on in advance, and by some creeping contrived to get within what would have been good shooting distance, if he had been armed with a gun.

The bow was not so reliable, however, at that long range, and when he let slip an arrow at the hawk, he saw it strike a glancing blow against the limb below it and then shoot downward and off at one side.

Not wishing to lose the arrow Jack noted the direction and distance it took, instead of watching the hawk, which flew away.

When the boys came up, Tom went with Jack in search of the arrow.

"Why, I didn't know there was a shanty here!" said Tom, as a cabin came into view.

There was dense shrubbery all about, and this had concealed the little, tumble-down cabin.

"The arrow went in that direction," said Jack, "and we'll have trouble in finding it. I oughtn't to have tried it on that hawk."

As they tramped through the shrubbery in search of the arrow they came suddenly on a rather grewsome sight.

Before them was a human skeleton, with the arrow sticking up between the ribs.

"The missing hermit!" Jack exclaimed.

"It must be," said Tom, in a low voice.

Apparently, by a strange freak of fate, the arrow fired at a hawk had revealed a tragedy; it seemed that the disappearance of the hermit, Crabbe, was no longer a mystery.

Jack's shout brought the other boys running; and they arrived to see Tom and Jack staring at the arrow sticking between the ribs of the skeleton.

"Gug-goshfry!" gurgled Jubal.

"Howling mackerels, a skeleton!" cried Skeen.

"And it looks as if the arrow had killed the man," observed Wilson.

"I'm bettin' 'twas that feller with the rifle done it, if he was killed," was Jubal's guess, remembering how he had been fired at.

"Do you suppose that can be the skeleton of the hermit that old Greasy told us about last night?" Lafe asked, seriously.

"There's no way to tell," said Jack.

"But there may be something about it—some means of identification," Tom suggested.

Up till now no one had advanced further toward the ghastly find, but now all went forward to investigate.

Wilson drew out the arrow, which had merely gone between the ribs and then had stuck in the ground beneath.

"Not injured," he said, as he looked at it.

"But it makes a fellow feel queer to put it back in his quiver and use it again," Jack observed.

Nevertheless, he returned it to the quiver, for arrows were likely to be valuable.

Looking again at the skeleton, the keen eyes of Jack Lightfoot saw a round object which seemed to have

been disturbed or shaken out of place by the withdrawal of the arrow.

He took the arrow from the quiver, and, putting its point against this little round thing, pushed it out upon the ground at one side of the skeleton.

"A bullet!" he cried.

He stooped and picked it up, holding it gingerly between his fingers.

"A bullet, fellows; and my guess is it's the bullet that killed the man, whoever he was."

He now took from his pocket the flattened bit of lead he had cut out of the tree.

All the boys gathered round, looking at the two pieces of lead.

"From the same rifle, is my guess," said Jack. "What do you think?"

"I'm betting the same thing!" said Skeen.

"Sure thing!" Jubal agreed, bending forward for a close look.

Tom took the two bullets and hefted them; then examined them closely. Each was flattened, but the one fired into the tree much more so than the other.

"I should say they're from the same gun."

"And that proves that the crazy guy out in the woods killed this man," was Skeen's conclusion.

"It looks so."

"And what are we to do?"

"Git aout of this," said Jubal, anxiously. "Some of us air likely to be skeletons mighty soon if we don't. That feller that's doin' the shootin' ain't my uncle, and I know it."

Jubal could not get away from that strange sensation of a bullet whizzing by his head and striking the tree. Jubal was no coward, but he was sure that bullet had been meant for him, and he had no desire to become a target for pellets of lead like that.

"It seems to me it's up to us to look into this thing a little further," was Jack's sensible statement. "My guess is that this man was murdered, and by the crazy chap who shot at Jubal. Perhaps the man is crazy and is not responsible for what he did; but just the same, the matter ought to be sifted. We ought to be able to find out who this man is and something about him."

Wilson, rendered curious by the finding of the lead, was making a further examination, but discovered nothing.

"We'll take a look through the cabin," Jack suggested. "He must have lived in it, and maybe we'll find something there."

At one side of the cabin was an old well, which held some filthy-looking water, and by it was a rusty

tin pail, with a rotting rope attached. Apparently, neither had been used for months.

The grass in front of the broken-down door was untrampled, and the cabin had an odor of mustiness and decay.

Going inside, the boys saw that the interior was poorly furnished. There was a homemade bed in one corner, covered with some moldy bed clothing. On a little mantel stood a cheap clock, which had long since stopped. In addition, at one end of the cabin was a fireplace, with some pans and kettles on the earthen hearth. Arranged on some rough shelves on the wall were a few battered tin plates, with broken knives and forks.

"Hello!" Jack cried out, as he and the others were making this search.

He had lifted a dust-covered block of wood from the mantel, and revealed beneath it he saw a scrap of paper containing writing.

All ran to him, drawn by his exclamation, as he lifted this paper.

All read the writing, which was but a penciled scrawl, uncompleted:

"I have buried the money in——"

That was all, the wavering words trailing away into an indistinguishable line after that.

But Jubal had given an excited cry, and seemed suddenly to have become as crazy as the boys believed the strange rifleman to be.

"By hemlock," he howled, "lemme look at that closer!"

He was fumbling nervously at a pocket in his coat, and brought out the letter written by his uncle, which he had received just before starting on this trip.

He held it up with shaking fingers to compare it with the writing on the paper found by Jack.

The resemblance between the two writings was remarkable.

The greatest noticeable difference was that one handwriting was stiff and angular and without shaking curves, and the other wobbled and sprawled over the paper, and then ran into indistinct lines.

Tom Lightfoot and Jack, and all the other boys, were staring at the writing and the letter.

Tom brought out his pocket magnifier.

"I should say, in spite of the differences, that they are the same handwriting," he declared, after an examination.

A silence fell on the group.

To everyone had been brought the sudden belief

that the skeleton lying out in the shrubbery was the skeleton of Jubal's uncle.

A hard sob choked Jubal's throat, a dash of tears came to his eyes, and a look of pain and distress crept into his homely face.

"By granny, that's tough, if it is him!"

"Oh, say, fellows, it can't be!" Lafe urged, moved by sympathy. "The writing looks a good deal alike, but there's still a big difference."

"Of course it can't be!" asserted Skeen, distressed by the thought of what it would mean to Jubal if the supposition were proven true.

"The difference in the writing is no greater than one would expect to find under the circumstances," argued Tom Lightfoot, coolly. "This man didn't finish what he meant to say, and that shows that he must have been sick, or something of the kind."

"Probably he had that bullet in him at the time," suggested Wilson; "and when he staggered out into the yard he fell there where we found him."

"It speaks of money," said Jubal, drying his eyes. "What in time do yeou make of that?"

They read the words again:

"I have buried the money in——"

"If he was sick, or wounded, and buried the money then, he must have buried it here in the house," was Jack's guess.

"Something was the matter with him, or he'd have finished what he tried to write," Tom argued. "And the way the letters are sprawled proves that, too. He got that far and hadn't strength to write another word clearly."

He put the magnifier on the writing again in an attempt to decipher the sentence beyond the legible words.

"Can't make it out," he confessed.

Jack was again moving round the cabin, and the other boys now joined in the search.

The thought that money was possibly hidden there proved a mighty stimulant, for the lure of gold is ever strong.

But for once Jubal was stirred by something more than the lure of gold. In addition to his naturally intense desire to learn if the skeleton might be that of his missing uncle, was the thought that if anything was discovered in the cabin with it might be some writing that would assist in the identification.

Though the resemblance of the two writings was so marked, he had not been able to convince himself beyond doubt that they were the same, any more than

he had been able to identify the queer rifleman as his uncle.

There was still great room for the belief that his uncle had not come to the vicinity of Cranford.

Above all, it seemed most unlikely that even if his uncle had started for Cranford he would have ventured into these woods.

The boys began their search by digging in the corners of the cabin with their knives and with sticks.

When this digging revealed nothing, they began to remove the few boards from the floor.

As this was fruitless, Tom Lightfoot again took a look at the two bullets, and then walked out into the shrubbery for another inspection of the skeleton.

Jack and the other boys gave over their search and joined him.

"I can't find that any of the bones of this man were broken, so far as I can see. What do you say to removing that bit of clothing there and looking underneath it?"

The clothing was scraped away with a stick.

There seemed a dent or partial fracture in one of the bones thus exposed.

"That might have been made by the bullet," said Tom.

He held up the bullet.

"You see it's flattened a little. If it struck only flesh it would hardly have been flattened so, and, besides, it's likely it would have gone through the body, unless it was fired from a considerable distance."

"Well, that crazy critter takes long shots," said Jubal.

"What I've been thinking," went on Tom, "is that this bullet may not have killed the man; it may have been in one of his pockets, and when the clothing fell to pieces it dropped down where we found it. If that's so he wasn't killed by it."

"Then you think he may have died naturally?" said Jack.

"I don't know. It's possible that when he wrote those words he was very sick. He may have come out to the well for water, and then reeled round and fell here where we found him."

"My suggestion," said Jack, "is to call in Wally Waggles. If he can get to see that mysterious rifleman he ought to be able to tell us if he is the man he calls the hermit Crabbe."

It was so good a suggestion that they decided they would act on it at once.

It was necessary, anyway, to communicate with some one and get word to the local authorities, that steps

might be taken in a legal way to determine the cause of this man's death, and to bring his murderer to punishment if it was found that he had met a violent death.

So, leaving the skeleton as they had found it, they departed from the tumble-down cabin and took their way back to camp, talking of the mystery, and keeping a sharp watch for the queer stranger who roamed the woods with that big rifle.

CHAPTER VII.

WALLY WAGGLES' DISCOVERY.

Jack Lightfoot had by this time about reached the conclusion that the man found dead was really Jubal Marlin's uncle, and that the man who prowled round with the rifle was the fellow called Crabbe, and that Crabbe had slain Mr. Marlin, perhaps for his money.

He talked this theory over with Tom and the others as they walked to the camp.

"Jube's uncle might have gone astray from the road and become lost in these woods, and he might have found his way to Crabbe's cabin. That may have been Crabbe's cabin. Crabbe may have discovered that he had money, and may have shot him. Well, I get rather balled up when I get that far. Apparently he didn't get the money, for this man wrote that he'd buried it. But if Crabbe killed him, or wounded him and left him there without finding the money, so that later the man was able to bury it and write that note, the thing may have set Crabbe off his head.

"He'd be expecting that some one would come to arrest him, and naturally when we appeared he thought of that. If he's crazy, and he must be, he'd try to kill us.

"I should think that in some way he learned that Jubal lived in Cranford. If the dead man was Jube's uncle he may have told the hermit that. Seeing us here and jumping to the conclusion that we came to look for him, one of Crabbe's first thoughts would be that Jube was leading the party, and that the rest of us had come with him. So he would try to find out if Jube was one of us. He asked me if I was Jubal Marlin, and he asked Skeen his name. He'd never seen Jube, if my supposition is correct, and so would not be able to recognize him at sight. And then he asked Jube; and jumped at Jube and tried to kill him when Jube told him his name. This morning he seems to have tried to shoot him. He might have the crazy thought, if he was insane, that that was the way to keep himself from being arrested for the murder. Crazy people do queer things and get queer ideas, you know."

There seemed to be some holes in Jack's theory, when they talked it over, yet Tom was inclined to accept it as the correct one.

"Then Uncle Jube is dead," said Jubal, thoughtfully.

He was trying hard not to show how this thought affected him.

"I've said he was an onreliable cuss, and he was; but he was sort o' good-hearted, tew. He was mighty tight abaout money matters, but I dunno as you kin hold that agin' him; a man's got tew be tight that way if he gits ahead any. He didn't believe much in banks, fer they're allus bustin', er the cashiers air runnin' away with the money. I reckon he'd saved up a purty good wad, fer his expenses weren't nothin' much tew speak of. It ruther s'prised me tew know he even thought of goin' to New York, on accaount of the expense it'd be. But I'm goin' to hope that it wasn't him, until I know better."

When they reached camp the time was long past noon; and as they were now very hungry, they helped Lafe prepare the fish and game, and had a good dinner, though they were short of bread.

Then they set out for the home of Wally Waggles, determined to enlist him in the search and try to have him determine the identity of the rifleman; for they were now resolved to run this mystery to the earth.

It was a duty they owed to Jubal, as well as to the dead man.

They found Mr. Waggles engaged in the useful work of digging some potatoes.

"I swan to man!" he said, and looked frightened, when they told him of their discovery. "I hope you ain't thinking that I killed that critter?"

"Nothing of the kind," said Jack; "but we want to get you to identify the fellow with the rifle."

Mr. Wally Waggles looked scared, then.

"He might try to take a shot at me. If he's shootin' into your crowd I reckon I'd feel healthier to stay right here."

"If you don't go with us," said Jack, as a sort of joke, "we'll drive him in this direction, so that you can't help seeing him. You must see him, you know, so that we can find out who he is. We'd like to know if he is that man Crabbe."

"Well, he must be. Crabbe lived over there."

"And we want you to tell us whose old cabin that is where we found the skeleton."

It took a good deal of persuasion on the part of the boys to get Waggles to venture into the woods with them; and before he would go he armed himself with

a rusty shotgun that seemed likely to do more damage at the breech than at the muzzle.

Having got him started, they piloted Waggles to the spot where the skeleton lay.

"I was never here but once," he confessed, "but this is where Crabbe lived; and if it was my guess, I'd say that is the skeleton of the hermit; and, of course, if it's his skeleton, then he can't be the t'other man."

Waggles was now so stirred up, by that hint of buried money, that he insisted on making another search of the cabin and its vicinity.

"If I'd thought to bring my 'tater hoe along I could tear this ground up lively," he said, with longing, when the search was as barren as the previous one.

Still moved by the searching ardor, he prospected through the shrubbery.

As he returned from one of these rounds he declared his belief that the dead man was not Crabbe, thus reversing his previous opinion.

"I vum, I believe you fellers is right, and that Crabbe killed this man, instead of bein' killed hisself! I'll have to git word to the officers about this right off. Crabbe killed this man fer his money, mebbe, jist as you said; and then went crazy thinkin' about it. It would set any man off his head, livin' alone like that and broodin' over a murder; 'specially when the murder was, as ye may say, a failure; fer it seems he didn't git any money after all, if the feller buried it, as he writ that he did."

Again he prospected through the shrubbery, being as excited as a pointer hunting for birds.

Suddenly he uttered a cry; and as they hastened toward him they heard him running toward the cabin.

When he came in sight his coat tails were fluttering and his greasy face had turned to a pasty white.

He seemed about to fall over in a fit.

"What is it?" Jack asked.

"I—I seen him!" he gasped, his pale lips trembling.

"Who? Crabbe?"

"'Twan't Crabbe, by gum! I don't know who 'twas. But it was the feller with the gun, and he was looking through the undergrowth at me. He lifted his gun when he seen I'd seen him, and I lit out. He's right over there now. But look out, fer he'll shoot!"

He was shaking with fear.

Jack plunged through the bushes in the direction indicated, followed by his companions, while Waggles dropped down by the cabin door, gasping for breath after his sharp run.

When they reached the spot where Waggles had been nothing was seen of the man with the rifle.

They went further into the woods, looking warily about, for no more than Waggles did they wish to run into a bullet.

When they came back to the cabin that same greasy pallor showed on Waggles' face.

"See him?" he asked.

"We didn't see anything."

"Well, he was there! I snum, I thought he was goin' to bore me! And I'd left my gun behind here, and——"

He fairly stammered the words.

"You're sure it wasn't Crabbe?" Jack asked.

"Purty shore. But he skeerd me like time."

He glanced off toward the skeleton.

"That's Crabbe over there, I reckon, pore feller; but who this other'n is gits me."

He rose to his feet, still panting and trembling.

"I reckon I'd better git word o' this to some officer er other. It's their duty to look into things of this kind, and not have other people reskin' their lives doin' duty that don't belong to 'em."

He seemed anxious to get away, and caught up his gun.

"Say," he said, anxiously, "couldn't you fellers go back with me to my house? I snum, I don't want to go through these woods alone, with that devil prowlin' round! I'm 'most afraid to start, as it is."

"I'll go with you," said Lafe, "if you'll let us have a bushel of those potatoes you were digging."

Waggles hesitated.

"We'll pay you for them," said Jack.

Then Greasy Waggles breathed freely.

"Why, of course; take all ye want to! They're fifty cents a bushel, though."

Tom laughed.

"That's all right; we'll pay you for them."

"Well, I snum, I think I'd like to be moving! Got somethin' to carry the 'taters in?"

"We can go by the camp and get one of the rubber blankets, and bring them in that," Jack suggested. "A bushel will be all we'll want."

"Well, you're welcome to 'em; they're fifty cents a bushel, and you can have all ye want, if you'll go back with me. I snum, I don't want to meet that critter alone!"

CHAPTER VIII.

JUBAL'S PERIL.

Wally Waggles tarried no longer at his cabin than was necessary to make sure that the boys took no more than a bushel of potatoes and that they contributed fifty cents for the same, and then he departed in hot haste, after declaring that he meant to summon an officer at once.

Jack and his friends returned to the camp, lugging the potatoes in the rubber blanket.

Though they talked a good deal, they were rather sober on the return journey, Jubal being noticeably so.

Since Waggles had said that the rifleman was not the hermit, they were rather at sea for a theory that would stand the test of close examination.

Who was the wild rifleman in the woods? Why had he killed the hermit, if the dead man was the hermit? And whose was the mysterious bit of writing which Jack had found on the mantel in that tumble-down cabin—writing that so strongly resembled the writing of Jube's missing uncle?

It was easier to ask these questions than to answer them.

They asked them of each other over and over, and were no nearer a solution of the muddle than before.

Lafe Lampton was the only member of the party who could get any cheerfulness out of the situation; and Lafe was cheerful merely because of that bushel of potatoes. That promised something to eat.

"Fellows," he said more than once, "if potatoes are roasted right they're almost as good as bread, and will do for bread. We can get plenty of game and fish, and there's still plenty of salt to season them with."

So long as the food promised to hold out Lafe could endure other troubles with equanimity.

Though they were somewhat afraid of the rifleman, that afternoon Lafe went down to the river with Wilson and Jubal, for Lafe declared that they must have more fish.

They went to a different spot from that where Jubal had heard the bullet sing by his head, and finding concealment in some bushes overhanging the high bank, they felt rather secure.

But the fishing was not so good here as where they had been before, and Lafe, dissatisfied, rose to go to another point.

As the three youths straggled along through the undergrowth on the banks of the stream, the wild rifleman parted the bushes and leaped upon Jubal, who was some yards in the rear.

Jubal dropped his bow and arrow and the few fish he had caught, and was engaged the next instant in a terrific combat with the man there on the bank.

Lafe and Wilson heard the sounds and turned back quickly.

What they beheld fairly paralyzed them for an instant, for they saw Jubal and the rifleman struggling together on the rocky bluff overhanging the water.

Jubal was no mean fighter, thanks to his athletic training in the high-school gym. He had grasped the rifleman by the throat and was pushing him back to the edge of the bluff.

The man had his arms about Jubal, however; and seemed not at all loath to go over, if he could drag Jubal down with him.

With a yell Lafe dashed toward the combatants, and Wilson followed him.

Then they saw Jubal and the rifleman topple from the bluff together and drop toward the river like a revolving, spokeless wheel.

They struck with a loud splash; and when Lafe reached the edge of the bluff both had gone out of sight beneath the water.

Lafe stood staring in amazement and fear, as Wilson reached his side.

Wilson's large eyes had rounded with fright, and he looked more than ever like the big bird whose name he bore as he craned his long neck over and stared intently into the water.

He gave a shout, as he saw Jubal's head rise to view and watched him begin to swim toward the shore.

Jubal came to the bank below puffing; and Wilson and Lafe scrambled down to give him whatever aid he needed.

But Jubal climbed out alone, sputtering and blowing the water out of his mouth. He was wet to the skin,

of course, and his head was bare, with the water plastering the hair tightly down on it. His cap had fallen on the bluff above during the struggle.

"By gum, did you see that?" he gasped, as soon as he could get his breath. "He tackled me right up there!"

Having crawled out of the water, he turned to see what had become of the man.

"Can I help you?" asked Lafe.

Both he and Wilson were looking into the water, expecting to see the man's head shoot into view.

Jubal stood up, the water running from his clothing in streams.

"Yeou seen him?"

"Yes," Wilson answered.

"Well, by time, that was a mighty clost call! If I hadn't jumped quicker'n lightnin' he'd have had me. Did yeou see his knife? It was a foot long, an' he driv it at my back. I heerd 'im, an' turned jist in time to keep it frum goin' intew me."

"Could it have been your uncle?" Wilson asked. "You got a good look at him this time."

"No, I didn't, nuther, git a good look at him; he was on top o' me before yeou could wink; and then I was fightin' tew gol-darned hard tew see anything. But I know 'twan't my uncle. He wouldn't do that, even if he was crazier'n a skunk."

"It begins to look as if he's drowned," said Lafe, anxiously.

"Serves him right, if he is!" cried Jubal. "He come at me with a knife—with a sticker a foot long, and tried to sock it intew my back. But I reckon yeou couldn't drown a devil like that."

A moment later he said:

"If that was my uncle he wouldn't want tew jump at me; he wouldn't have any call tew do that; he'd know me, even if he was off his base."

"I'll be hanged if I don't believe he is drowned!" cried Wilson.

"He might have struck his head against something when he went under," Lafe suggested; for, like Wilson, he began to think that the man must be drowned, or he would have shown himself.

They walked along the stream, pushing aside the

thick-growing bushes to give them passageway, bushes which made it impossible for them to see far in any direction.

But though they made this search, peering into the water and up and down the stream, they were able to see nothing of the mysterious rifleman.

It gave them a queer sensation, to be thus searching for a man who had been so short a time before fighting with Jubal, and who, so far as they could tell, was now at the bottom of the river.

When they were unable to discover the man or his body, they climbed up the bank and went to the place where he had leaped out upon Jubal.

They expected to find his long rifle lying there on the ground, but it was not there.

"My bows an' arrers air gone, tew!" said Jubal, staring blankly.

"You dropped them here, I suppose, when he attacked you?" said Lafe.

"Yes, I did; an', by granny, my string o' fish air gone, an' my pole an' line!"

Jubal stared around, with his mouth dropping open; and he was a forlorn object, with his clothing adrip, and that troubled, almost frightened, look on his homely face.

"Here's your cap, anyway!" said Wilson.

"Say," said Lafe, as he poked unsuccessfully among the bushes, "you don't suppose while we were down there looking for him he could have got out of the water and come back here and swiped the bow and arrows and got his gun?"

"Why, how could he?" Wilson demanded.

"We didn't see him leave the water."

"We decided he must have been drowned, you know."

"We guessed that, because we didn't see him come up."

Jubal walked cautiously to the edge of the bluff and looked over.

Lafe and Wilson followed, and also looked over.

"Better be careful," Jube warned; "if he's over on t'other bank some'eres he might take a shot at us!"

It seemed a possible thing, yet hardly likely, that the man had swum under water to the bank, and then

had climbed cautiously ashore, after which he had made his way up to the bluff and secured the articles that were missing.

"You couldn't have kicked that bow and the quiver over while you two were fighting?" Wilson asked of Jubal.

"I dunno what we done, then. I had all I could do to keep frum goin' over myself; and we did go over, him an' me together, yeou know. Might have kicked the hull blamed laidge over, fer all I was able to tell then."

The more the boys talked the thing over and speculated on it the greater the mystery grew.

The only conclusion they could reach was that the man had actually got out of the water and climbed back to the bluff and taken the things while they were below looking for him.

The fishing was abandoned, though Lafe said they had not half as many fish as were needed; yet all were willing to stop the sport a while and hasten back to the camp.

Jubal wanted to get out of his wet clothing and hang it up to dry while the warm afternoon sunshine still lasted.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WARNING MESSAGE.

Jubal's wet clothing was hanging on some poles, and Jubal himself was sitting, wrapped in a blanket, before the camp fire where Lafe was busily engaged in frying the few fish which had been caught, and roasting potatoes, when Jack came in with the other members of the party, bringing some game. Wilson Crane was standing guard, so that the rifleman, if he were still living, might not creep on the camp unawares.

Lafe shouted with delight when he saw the squirrels and the rabbits.

"Oh, we're all right again!" was his joyful exclamation. "Now we can have a dinner fit for a king."

"Or a hungry camper," laughed Jack.

"We're all kings here in America!" said Tom. "Six kings can draw up at our table on the grass to-day and eat game and potatoes and fish with their fingers. But I rather like it."

"I've known a better hand than even six kings," remarked Wilson, dryly, thus recalling the days when he and Jubal played cards with the "Gang."

"But tell 'em abaout that," Jubal urged, giving no heed to Wilson's remark.

Lafe told it; and it was so startling a story that Jack and his companions were fairly dumfounded; though, perhaps, they should not have been, when the things which the rifleman had done before are recalled.

"You think it couldn't have been your uncle?" Jack queried.

That fairly made Jubal angry.

"By hemlock, don't say that ag'in, if yeou don't want tew rile me! If my Uncle Jube was crazier than a 'tater bug, he'd have more sense than tew do that. Why should he want tew tackle me? Even if he had growed a beard so that I couldn't rec'nize him, I ain't changed so very much and he'd know me."

As if to confound Jubal and refute his boasting, an arrow flirted past his head and struck in the hemlock boughs near him.

He sprang up, with the blanket about him; and all the boys who were sitting down leaped to their feet.

They caught up their bows and arrows and stared off into the woods.

Bushes grew out there, and a number of high rocks obstructed the view.

For a full minute they stood staring into the woods, hearing nothing and seeing nothing. The silence was so profound that they seemed almost to have stopped breathing.

Jack was the first to turn and look at the arrow, which had lodged in the hemlock boughs.

"Keep a watch out there," he warned, and pulled out the arrow.

All turned to see it, and heard his exclamation, and beheld the strip of birch bark wrapped round it which had drawn the cry from him.

"Writing!" he said, as he opened the birch.

Seeing that all were looking, he asked Wilson to keep a watch out in front for the man who had shot the arrow.

"One o' my arrers, I bet!" said Jubal, staring at it.

The writing had been scratched on the bark with some sharp instrument, and it read:

"This is a warnin'. There will be wuss come before long."

It was not the words alone that caused them to stare so, but the writing. It seemed to be the same as that in the writings previously mentioned.

With a strange, scared cry Jubal ran to his wet coat, where he had left the letter from his uncle forgotten and overlooked, and drew it out. It was soaked, but as legible as ever, and he came back with it and held it up beside the birch bark warning.

"What is it?" Wilson asked, as he stood guard with his big eyes fixed on the bushes and rocks and woods. "Found something?"

"Yes," said Jack, "that arrow brought a message."

He read it aloud.

"It seems to be the same kind of writing as the others. But keep a lookout there."

"It's exactly the same as the writing in Jube's letter," Tom asserted.

Again he took out his pocket magnifier, and passed it over the birch message and over the letter, letting the others look.

There seemed now no reasonable doubt that the message and the letter from Jube's uncle were the same, even if some question might exist as to the scrawl found in the cabin.

Jubal was dumfounded.

"I don't want tew believe it," he urged.

"We don't any of us want to believe it," said Jack; "but we've got to believe what we see."

"Howling mackerels!" It was Ned Skeen's favorite exclamation. "Have we got to believe that fool rifleman, who has been trying to kill us, is Jube's uncle?"

"If he's Jube's uncle, he's crazy," said Tom.

"Wan't never any of aour family had bats in their garrets, that I ever knowed on," Jube asserted. "And Uncle Jube wan't never a man to go off his base in that way. He was sing'lar, but there wan't nuthin' crazy abaout him."

"The thing hasn't been proved, you know," ventured Jack, more to comfort Jubal than because it seemed to him it was not proved.

"Jiminy crickets, seems to me we're up against a bigger mystery than ever!" was Lafe's conclusion. "If we get anything out of the comparison of these writings it is that the rifleman is Jube's uncle. Whoever the man is, he carries that big rifle. We found a bullet from that rifle in the skeleton—it must have been from that rifle. That would seem to show that this man, even if he is Jube's uncle, killed the man at the cabin, who may have been the hermit, Crabbe. Then whose was the money? Oh, say, I'm all tangled up about this!"

All the others were also tangled up about it.

"There's one thing," called out Wilson; "we'd better move this camp away from these bushes and rocks!"

"And there's another thing," said Lafe; "that rifleman wasn't drowned. He did come back to the top of the bluff while we were looking for him in the river and took away Jube's bow and arrows. That must be one of Jube's arrows."

"But he left Jube's cap," said Skeen, trying hard to be humorous. "Jube, you can thank him for that!"

When the boys sat down to dinner that day they had three guards out in the woods; then the three who had eaten stood guard while the others took their turn.

"We'll move camp," was Jack's decision; and as soon as they had finished eating they proceeded to do this, carrying their supplies and blankets to the higher portion of the hillside, where they chose a sort of amphitheater, surrounded by rocks which could not be easily approached, but from which they could see readily in all directions.

CHAPTER X.

WAITING.

Neither that night nor the next morning did Wally Waggles appear with the officer he had said he meant to bring.

Ned Skeen began to argue that Waggles himself was the murderer of the man found dead by the cabin, but no one would agree with him.

When Waggles still absented himself, and fear of the mysterious rifleman kept the boys from fishing and

hunting, they decided that they must either go into some other section or make a search for Waggles and find out what he had done.

In this dilemma, and with their food reduced almost to potatoes alone, they moved camp again, proceeding to Waggles' cabin, and pitching camp almost in what might have been called his dooryard, if he had been blessed with such a thing.

There were some trees in front of Waggles' abode, and here the boys brought hemlock boughs and poles and set up their green tents, and dug a fire hole for Lafe to roast potatoes in.

Lafe's eyes shone as he looked upon Waggles' little potato patch and weedy garden.

Waggles was a very slovenly gardener, with more weeds in his garden than anything else; yet even in the midst of the weeds the boys had seen that there were beans and late peas, beets, onions, parsnips and carrots, and other vegetables. There was also a little patch of sweet corn just right for roasting, and some early turnips, not to mention the potatoes which they had already tested.

"We'll take what we need, and pay him for it when he comes," was Lafe's suggestion; and to the others it seemed a good one.

Within Waggles' cabin, which they found unfastened—it had neither lock nor bolt on it—they found some kettles and other cooking utensils, which they scoured with sand and water until they fairly shone, for Lafe felt otherwise that he could not use them.

"Say, we'll live high all right while old Wag is gone!" he cried in great, good humor, as they brought the kettles and other things over to his camp fire.

Then Lafe dived into the garden and began to pull up vegetables by the handful.

While in the midst of this delightful work he was startled by Waggles' bellowing roar; for Waggles had come on the scene and beheld the devastation that was going on.

"Wow!" he squalled. "What in the name o' Sam Hill ye doin' in there? That's my garden!"

The other boys turned and saw Waggles standing on the edge of the potato patch, and saw Lafe rise out of the beet rows with his hands full of beets. The

weeds were so high about Lafe that they almost reached to his knees.

"Come out o' there!" Waggles bellowed.

Lafe smiled and waved the red beets at him as if they were red flags of defiance and anarchy.

"Why, we supposed you were dead!" he shouted. "And so we thought we'd help ourselves to this stuff, as you'd never need it."

"Need it?" yelled Waggles, walking toward him. "That's my livin', by hokey! Who s'gested to ye that you could dig up them vegetables?"

"Hunger," said Lafe, calmly, still clinging to the beets. "There isn't any law that says a fellow must starve when there are a lot of things to eat growing close by him. But we mean to pay you for these things."

"I snum, I reckon you'll have to!"

But the suggestion that he was to be paid for them considerably mollified his wrath.

Jack and the other boys came hurrying over from the camp.

"Why didn't you come back last evening?" Jack asked. "We waited for you; and when you didn't show up we moved over here this morning, for we didn't care to stay longer over there in the woods after what has happened. Where is the officer?"

Jack was half convinced that Waggles had seen no officer.

"He wouldn't come. That is, he wouldn't come at once. He said that he'd consult some jedge er other about it, and then would bring a possum er somethin' of the kind over."

"A posse," said Jack.

"Well, it sounded like possum. I dunno what he meant by it."

"He meant he'd get together a crowd of people to act as his assistants in arresting the man who is out in the woods."

"I snum, I'm thinkin' he'll need 'em! Lemme see!" he made a mental calculation, as his eyes roved over the things Lafe had been pulling. "I cal'late you've got about sixty cents wu'th of stuff pulled up already."

"We'll make it a dollar's worth," said Lafe, "for I'm not through yet. I've got to have some of those

onions for a stew, and some of those beans and peas, and a little of that sweet corn and other things. We'll pay you for whatever we take. And I want you to let us have some flour, too, and some corn meal."

Waggles let Lafe have the things he wanted, and was satisfied when Jack had counted out the money in his greasy palm.

Having received pay for the things taken from the garden, Waggles intruded his greasy form at the camp fire, and ate more than anyone else there, including Lafe.

"Now I'm ready to tell ye the hull p'ticklers," he said, putting his back lazily against a tree and stuffing tobacco into his pipe.

But the "p'ticklers" amounted to no more than that he had found the constable of the township and laid the matter before him, and that the constable had promised to look into it as soon as he could consult with the local justice of the peace and summon a posse to assist him in the search and in arresting the mysterious stranger of the woods.

Waggles was very much interested when shown the birch message, and compared it as carefully with Jubal's letter as if he had been an expert in the examination of handwriting.

"I sh'd say it's the same," he declared.

He looked at Jubal through the cloud of smoke he exhaled.

"But I don't make out about that buried money. If them three writin's is by the same man, and I judge they air, then the chap that's been doin' this shootin' and wrasslin' has hid the money."

He still eyed Jube through the smoke cloud.

"I'm all tangled up, fer I thought that man was Crabbe. If he's yer uncle, it looks to me as if he killed pore Crabbe, and mebbe took what money Crabbe had and has buried it. But I dunno why he should go to writin' about it and leave the writin' on the mantel in the house there. When I git that fur I'm like a dog with a coon up a tree; I can't see the coon, ner git to him, though I can smell him. My smeller p'int to certain things, though I can't jest see 'em ner figger any way to git to 'em."

He turned to Jack.

"What you goin' to do now?"

"But for the mystery of the thing and our feeling that Jube's uncle must be mixed up in it some way we'd cut out of here," Jack answered, quite frankly. "But we'd like to see it through. We'll stay right here, I suppose, until your constable and his men come and we see what they make of it."

"And by that time, I snum, I won't have anything in my garden but weeds!"

However, he jingled in his pocket the coins which Jack had given him, and did not seem so very much distressed by the thought of the loss of his vegetables.

Wally Waggles was not willing to venture from the shadow of his own doorway that day or night; and as there was nothing to draw the boys into the woods, and many considerations why they should stay out of them, they remained in their camp close by Waggles' door.

When the next forenoon passed and still the constable and his posse did not come, Jack began to think that it was time for himself and friends to take some steps on their own account, for he could not rid himself of the idea that Jubal's uncle was the strange rifleman.

He knew from talks with them that Tom and others felt the same. He had not pressed his arguments on Jubal, however, for they carried the theory that this uncle either while insane or for sinister purposes had killed the hermit. It was possible, and the facts so far as known bore out the notion, that he had become insane after committing the murder and through brooding over it.

The handwriting alone connected Jube's uncle with the mystery upon which the boys had stumbled; yet that handwriting spoke volumes as evidence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE POT OF MONEY.

Having thought the thing out and consulted with Tom and Lafe, Jack now suggested that the whole party go again into the woods, but that they keep close together to prevent any surprise on the part of the mysterious man who made his haunt there.

"I want to see if we can't in some way get on the

track of that money," he said. "As Jube once thought, if we could find that money we might discover something with it which would explain things."

When Wally Waggles heard this, he declared at first that he would go with them and take his shotgun. It was clear that he feared to remain at his cabin alone.

But when they were ready to start he announced a change of mind; and saying that he would go again and see why the constable delayed, he took his gun and made a hasty exit from the cabin in the other direction, hitting the road at a lively gait that led westward from the place.

Jack laughed as he saw the greasy coat of Waggles disappearing up the road.

"That fellow is about as big a coward as I ever saw!"

"By granny, he's a right tew be!" Jubal declared. "If it wan't fer them writin's sort of mixin' me up in this thing I'd light out myself."

And Jubal was no coward.

Keeping close together, the boys again plunged into the woods, and going to the cabin of the hermit and the river they made a search. But they saw nothing of the rifleman. Apparently, he had left the vicinity.

Lafe wanted to fish, when he reached that good fishing hole in the river; but Jack was anxious to push on, saying that as now they had plenty of food they would not take the time to fish.

"A few fish would help out a lot!" Lafe grumbled.

Yet they went on; and one result of the further search of the river banks was that by and by they came upon another cabin, hidden, like the first, in the midst of a growth of shrubbery and small trees.

It was in somewhat better condition, and gave every appearance of being inhabited. The grass was trampled down before the door, and there was a path leading to the well, where again the grass was trampled.

On entering the cabin they found a cot of skins and old blankets in one corner supported on a framework of poles set into the logs of the walls; and, in addition to this, evidences that a fire had been burning in the fireplace that morning.

"He's been cooking here to-day, whoever he is," said Lafe.

All believed that they had found the home of the queer rifleman.

Jack now posted Wilson and Lafe outside for guards, and he and the others began to look the cabin over.

"I suppose this is taking liberties," he said, "and perhaps liberties that we haven't any right to take, but just the same, as no officer has come to dip a hand in the matter, we'll see what is here."

There was an old box at one side of the room that was apparently used as a stool; yet the fact that it was placed over there by the wall, in a corner, where there was no light, made Jack regard it with suspicion.

He called the boys' attention to it, and then dragged it from its position.

Beneath it was fresh earth, as if a hole had been gouged out there and then filled in.

Jack dropped down on his knees and began to scoop out this earth with his hands, while the others looked on.

Pretty soon his fingers touched something hard.

"Something in here, sure!" he said, and clawed away with new energy.

When he had drawn out a few more handfuls of the clay he saw before him the top of a covered iron pot.

This he pulled out, by getting it by the handle, and then lifted the top.

"Money!"

The exclamation came from Jubal.

"Sure thing!" cried Skeen, dancing about in his excitement.

Jack lifted out the money—it was in bills, with a few silver and copper pieces below it—and gave it to Tom.

"Count it," he said.

He was fairly trembling, and the others were quite as excited.

Tom's fingers shook as he began to count the money.

It was a considerable roll, and when Tom had gone through it and had counted the coins, he announced:

"Five hundred and sixty dollars and forty-three cents."

"Is there anything in there showin' whose it is?" Jubal asked, anxiously.

Was this the money mentioned in that slip of paper found at the other cabin, and did it belong to his uncle?

That question was not only in Jubal's mind, but in the minds of all the others.

"Howling mackerels, what a find!"

"It's a good deal," said Jack, "and until we know better we have to believe that it belongs to the man who owns this cabin and makes his home here. We don't even know that this is the rifleman's cabin. And we may be getting ourselves into trouble by doing this."

He took the money and put it back into the iron pot, and then set the pot in the hole.

"Yeou goin' to leave it there?" Jubal demanded.

"What shall I do with it? It isn't ours!"

"We'll put it back there," said Tom, "and then some of us will guard the cabin. When the man comes, if it's not the fellow we think, we'll tell him what we've done and why, and apologize."

"And if it's the rifleman?" asked Skeen.

"Well, then, I think it will be our duty to find out if he's crazy, and, if he isn't, to demand an explanation of his conduct."

"He'll make a fight, you bet!" said Skeen.

"If he don't try to shoot one of us it will be a wonder," was Jack's observation. "The only way to keep him from trying that will be for us to take him by surprise, instead of letting him take us unawares."

Jack had hardly said this when there was a yell from Lafe Lampton outside, followed by the report of a heavy rifle, and another cry from Wilson Crane.

Jack abandoned the pot of money and leaped through the open door.

As soon as he was outside he was gratified to see that neither Lafe nor Wilson were hurt.

Lafe had run to the edge of the shrubbery beyond the well, in the direction of the river, and there Jack saw some bushes waving, which indicated the progress of the man who had fired the shot.

It was not recklessness now that took Jack in quick pursuit, but courage and an exercise of his reasoning faculties. The shape of the bullets—they were round

balls of lead—told him that the rifle which the man carried was a muzzle-loading rifle. Therefore, having fired that shot from it, the rifle was now empty and useless as a weapon except as a club. The man had a knife, of course, but that was not so much to be feared.

"Come on!" Jack cried to Tom. "He's shot the load out of his gun, and if we crowd him hard he won't have time to reload."

He was gone even while he spoke, bounding on in the pursuit.

If he could do no more, Jack desired to come near enough to this man to make sure that this was none other than the rifleman, though such evidence seemed scarcely necessary.

But Jack was dealing with a man who, though he had evinced little judgment, now showed a crafty mind.

When Jack dashed out on the high, rocky shore of the river, expecting to see the man running along the bank some distance away or swimming in the stream, the man rose up from behind a rock where he had crouched in waiting and swung at him with the rifle.

Jack ducked to avoid the murderous blow; and then, seeing that he would have to close in with the man to keep from being brained by him, he sprang like a tiger at his throat.

The man struck again with the rifle as Jack thus lunged in; but Jack expected that and avoided it; and then he fastened his iron fingers on the fellow's throat.

The man now dropped the rifle with a yell and tried to get out his knife.

Shifting his hold, Jack secured a clutch of the knife hand, and then tried to trip the man.

They fell halfway to the ground together, the man dropping to one knee.

Jack heard Tom and the other boys crashing through the bushes behind him.

The man heard them too, and it seemed to give him the strength of a giant.

He broke Jack's hold, and when Jack tried to get him again he smashed a fist into Jack's jaw that spun him round whirling; and before Jack could turn, the man had leaped wildly from the bank, leaving his heavy rifle lying on the rocks.

Jack ran to the edge of the cliff, breathless from his exertions.

Then he beheld something that horrified him.

The man in his leap had caught his foot in a vine that grew out from the face of the rock, and, being thus retarded and tripped, he turned a wild somersault in mid air, and came down with a twisting motion toward the stream, which was here a mad torrent churning over half-hidden rocks.

The man seemed to avoid these rocks in his fall, and, striking the water heavily, shot down and out of sight.

"Run below there along the bank and see where he comes up!" Jack shouted to his friends; while he remained to watch the stream where the man had disappeared.

A minute later he heard Wilson Crane yell from below:

"Here he goes!"

Jack ran down the bank, followed by some others, and found Wilson staring at the waters with his big eyes.

"I think he was drowning," said Wilson. "He struck that whirlpool and swung round and then went down again, throwing up his hands."

The man rose into view at the edge of the whirlpool, clawing wildly at the air.

Jack went down the bank with quick leaps, and plunged into the water without stopping to remove shoes or clothing.

The man had sunk from sight again, but Jack had seen where he went down, and, calculating the force of the whirl, he dived like a flash.

When he rose to the surface he had the man by the hair, and Wilson, who had waded as far out into the water as he could, came now to Jack's aid.

The other boys on the bank, seeing this, came running, and were at the edge of the water as Wilson and Jack dragged their burden to the land.

The man was but half conscious, and Jack could see that he had struck something and cut a bloody gash in his head.

They began at once the work of resuscitation, by rolling him on the bank to get the water out of his

lungs, and moving his arms up and down and breathing into his nostrils and mouth.

Their strenuous efforts were soon rewarded with success.

Tom, seeing that the man was coming back to consciousness, climbed back on the bank, anxious to take a look at that big rifle. He had in his pocket the two bullets that it was believed had come from it. As he went, he heard Jubal loudly declaring that the man was not his uncle.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY UNRAVELED.

As Tom picked up the rifle he heard a shout, and, glancing up the stream, he saw on the bank above Wally Waggles and several men.

Waggles had really seen the constable, as he had claimed, and in his hurried retreat from his home that forenoon he had come upon him and the posse he had gathered; and these were the men whom Tom now beheld, led by Waggles, whose courage was good enough when he had a big crowd with him.

"We heard you yellin' over here," Waggles explained. "We was goin' to Crabbe's cabin, but run this way when we heard ye."

"We've got him," said Tom. "And here is his rifle."

Waggles and the men with him stared.

"I snum, ye don't mean it?"

"He jumped into the river here and came near drowning. The boys are right down there bringing him to."

"I swan to man!"

Waggles and the men followed Tom at a lively pace along the river, and scrambled with him down the bank to the margin of the stream.

Then Waggles uttered a howl of surprise.

"I snum, it's Crabbe!"

He rushed up to the prostrate man and bent over him, and the resuscitated man stared up at him with a wild look in his little, gray eyes.

"It's Crabbe, I snum! But he's changed so that I didn't rec'nize him when I seen him before."

Crabbe had recovered consciousness, and when he

beheld the flat, greasy face of Wally Waggles bending over him, the wild look in a measure went out of his eyes. Yet it could still be seen that he was not right in his mind.

He stared at Jack and his friends, and at the men with the constable.

"If you'll take these fellers away, Waggles, and keep 'em frum hangin' me I'll tell ye how 'twas!" he shouted. "But they're goin' to hang me!"

"They ain't, nuther," said Waggles, consolingly. "I'm goin' to stand right by ye. What is it ye want to say? You been killin' anybody, Crabbe?"

Crabbe struggled to a half-sitting posture.

"Take 'em away!" he begged.

Waggles waved a greasy hand, as much as to say, "Stand back out of his sight!"

All stood back.

"Now they're gone," said Waggles, reassuringly. "And what ye've got to say you can tell me, ye know, fer I'm yer old friend! I'm guessin' that you've been killin' somebody?"

"Yes, I have," said Crabbe, his eyes shining strangely.

He bent toward Greasy Waggles and caught him by the coat.

"I'll tell you, fer you're my friend."

"Right ye air," said Waggles; "and I'll stand by ye!"

"Well, he come to my house," said Crabbe, in a high whisper, which all could hear; "and he had a lot o' money. He'd lost his way, and was bound for Cranford. He come an' stayed all night with me, and he said his name was Marlin, and that he had a nevvie livin' in the town over there of the same name as his, an' he was goin' to see him. He had money to pay his car fare, but he'd walked some o' the way to save it; and so he was footin' it along the road. He tried to take a short cut through these woods and got lost, and I come on him while he was wandering round, and he went home with me to stay all night. And he had a lot o' money!"

He stopped, gasping, and drew Waggles nearer to him.

"And then he got sick there. I didn't intend to kill him, but after he'd got sick, and I'd had a chance to see

his money, the devil got into me. I kep' away from him and fit the devil; but the devil got the better of me. I went over there finally, intendin' to kill him an' git the money, an' he come out into the yard there by the well. I run, at first, fer my narves went back on me; then when I seen him reelin' round I up and shot him."

"So, ye killed him?" said Waggles, when the hermit stopped again.

Crabbe pulled Waggles to him again.

"Yes," he whispered, shrilly, "I killed him; and then I ran off in the woods and hid, and stayed there a long time. I don't know how long, but 'twas a long time. An' then I come back, and I found the money he'd hid, an' took it an' put it in another cabin that was off there in the woods, and I hid it there."

He pulled Waggles close down to him; he was panting and almost livid.

"You ain't goin' to tell anything about this?"

"No," said Waggles.

"That's right, don't tell no one. But they heard of it over in Cranford. I knowed all the time they would. And then they come huntin' fer me. But I was too smart fer 'em!"

He laughed horribly.

"I was too smart fer 'em. I killed three of 'em, while they was lookin' fer me; and I'm goin' to kill 'em all. They've found out where the money is—in my cabin in that iron pot; but I'm goin' to kill all of 'em, so's they can't git it, and can't take me away and hang me."

"That's right," said Waggles. "Allus look out fer Number One."

"They was here a while ago, but they're gone now; you scared 'em away."

"You bet they're afeared o' me!" said Waggles.

The man laughed again in that blood-curdling way.

"And they're afeared o' me! You ought to seen 'em run; but I killed three of 'em, and I'm goin' to kill the others. An' then they can't hang me. Say, that's a pile of money; I'll show it to ye some day."

He dropped back against the tree, exhausted, but his eyes still shone with that strange glitter.

Jack slipped up behind Waggles, tugged at his coat

to attract his attention, and thrust into the fat, greasy hand the slip of writing found on the mantel in the hermit's cabin where the skeleton was discovered.

Waggles understood what was wanted.

He brought his hand round and showed Crabbe the slip of paper in it.

"D'ye ever see this?"

Crabbe stared at it.

"No," he said, hoarsely; "where'd ye git it?"

"Jest found it."

Jack slipped into Waggles' hand the birch bark message.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Crabbe, when he saw that. "I found that in his cabin when I found the gold."

This was so unexpected that Jack gave a start of surprise. He had seen that the birch bark was old; but he had thought the writing, or rather the scratching, was new.

These words were on the birch bark:

"This is a warnin'. There will be wuss come before long."

"I took that when I took the money," said Crabbe, with a cunning look. "I don't know why I took it."

"What did he mean by writin' it?"

"I dunno."

"Can't ye guess? I'm kind o' curious about that."

"Well, I allowed that he writ it after he took sick and couldn't go on any fuder. I cal'lated that he thought the sickness was a warnin' o' some kind, and that he expected wuss was to come. And it did—it did!"

He laughed again, rolling his shining eyes.

"My bullet was wuss! You'd think it was wuss, wouldn't ye?"

"A good deal wuss."

"Yes, so it was—a good deal wuss."

"Well, I was told by them young fellers that you shot this at 'em as a warnin'?"

"So I did—so I did!" Crabbe chuckled, craftily. "I thought it'd clear 'em out. I can't write much, ye know, though I can read a little. And so I sent that."

He laughed over his cleverness.

"It scared 'em, too, and they went away; but they come back ag'in. I killed one of 'em a while ago.

They foiled me to the cabin and found the money, and then I killed one of 'em; shot 'im; and they chased me, and I jumped into the river."

* * * * *

Nothing was clearer than that Crabbe was a dangerously insane man; and, though he had been responsible for the murder of Jubal's uncle at the time the crime was committed, he was an irresponsible creature now; the murder had wrecked his mind.

Therefore, instead of being imprisoned for his crime, or hanged, he was sent to an asylum for the insane.

But all this was not done at once, for there were many legal preliminaries, after he was removed from the woods by the constable and his posse.

But the mystery which had puzzled Jack and his friends had been cleared away.

Jubal's uncle, it was plain now, had started for Cranford.

Being penurious, he had preferred to walk a part of the distance rather than spend money for the railroad fare, and he had taken the road leading along Laurel River.

Trying for a short cut through the woods, he had become lost, and was met by the hermit, who had conducted him to that little cabin.

There Jubal Marlin, Sr., had fallen sick.

It seemed likely to Jack and his friends, and as being in accordance with what would naturally be the facts, that Jubal's uncle had not spoken of the money he carried with him until his tongue had been loosened and his caution lost by the fever that came upon him.

It was even possible that the first that Crabbe knew of the money was revealed to him while he tried to assist the sick man.

However that may have been, it was certain that a desire for that money had put the thought of murder into the mind of the hermit, and that he had finally consummated the deed, after neglecting the sick man for days; and had then shot him as he tried to get out to the well for water.

After that Crabbe's mind had broken down under the terrors of fear and remorse.

It seemed a peculiar fate that had led Jubal into the woods on that archery hunting and camping trip with

Jack and his friends, and had conducted him to the place where the discovery of his uncle's remains was so strangely made by the arrow which Jack fired at the hawk.

But for the eccentric flight of that arrow the party might have remained in the woods a long time without making that discovery; and probably they would have been frightened away by the insane and murderous conduct of the crazy hermit, without learning anything.

* * * * *

As soon as the party could get back to Cranford an undertaker was sent to the place where the skeleton lay, and Jubal telegraphed to Susan Garloch the facts of his startling discovery.

The remains were taken back to the home of Jubal Marlin, Sr., and there given respectful burial.

There is one thing more to be said, for it may have an important bearing on Jubal's future.

He was the sole heir of Jubal Marlin, Sr.

In addition to the money which Jube's uncle foolishly carried with him because he feared to trust it to any bank, a further small sum was found hidden in his home, the whole amounting to about a thousand dollars.

Besides this, the rocky New England farm owned by his uncle descended to Jubal.

"It's good, strong land," said Jubal.

"It's nearly all rock," said Jack, who had accompanied Jubal home with the remains of his uncle.

"That's what I said—it's good, strong land; it has to be strong tew hold up all them rocks that air on it!"

"Well, I hope you'll get something out of it some day."

"Me tew," said Jubal.

But at the time he hardly expected that he would.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 33, is "Jack Lightfoot's Cleverness; or, The Boy Who 'Butted In.'" This is a capital story of sports at Cranford, and introduces an interesting character in the boy who "butted in." You will want to know who he is, and you will be sure, also, to enjoy the story.

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

I have been reading the ALL-SPORTS from the first number, and can't begin to express my admiration for it. I write this letter, however, to see if you can help me. I am 5 feet 2 inches tall and weigh 180 pounds, and am only 15 years old. All the fellows call me "Tubs" and "Fatty," and as I have always been fond of athletics and been ambitious to become a good, all-around athlete, I want to know if there is not some way to get thin. How much should I weigh, and how can I get down to it? Although I am fat, I am not lazy, and play baseball, but can't run bases very well. I enjoy all outdoor sports, and if I was only thin like other boys, I'd be the happiest boy in the United States. Trusting that you will be able to tell me something that will make me thin, I am, an ALL-SPORTS admirer, Springfield, Ohio.

"LAFE LAMPTON."

Yours is a sad case, but not a hopeless one, by any means. We hope that your appetite is not as great as Lafe's, however, for if that is the case, we fear your chances of reducing your weight would be rather slim. In the first place, your weight should be about one hundred and ten pounds, so, you see, you are about seventy pounds overweight. Now, in regard to a diet: The amount of food eaten should be restricted to the actual satisfaction of hunger; beyond this not an ounce must be taken. Do not drink at meal times and sparingly through the day. Avoid pork in all forms, fat meats, cheese, butter, milk and potatoes; all sweets, coffee and tea. An active habit of life must be cultivated, both mental and physical. Want of regular exercise is one of the chief factors in producing obesity. Exercise burns up the excess of food, which otherwise produces fatness. Hot baths should be taken at least twice a week. An occasional Turkish bath is beneficial. By following these directions carefully, and exercising as much as possible in the open air, you will soon notice a decided change in your figure, and you will soon lose your nickname and join your companions in calling some other unfortunate fellow "Fatty."

I want to be marked down as an admirer of Jack Lightfoot. He's just the sort of boy I like, and I follow his adventures week by week with an eagerness words will not let me describe. In fact, I've become so much attached to Jack and the balance of that hustling Cranford crowd that if by some accident you stopped printing ALL-SPORTS—which I do hope never will happen—I'd feel like putting crape on my hat, because it would seem as if I'd lost a bully good friend. I hope your splendid paper will keep up for many years, and that, from time to time, you will give us an idea as to just how Jack builds things. He made an iceboat—now you have never said whether he ever built a skiff or a canoe. I want to try both, and would if I knew just how to go about it, and what it would cost. Please note the change of address, as we have moved since I subscribed.

Bridgeport, Conn.

CLARENCE L. COLLINS.

When you have read a recent number of ALL-SPORTS, Clarence, you will learn that Jack *did* make a canoe. He also built several other boats in times past, having quite a talent that way. We have received other inquiries with regard to the making of a cheap skiff, such as might be paddled like a canoe; and for your benefit, as well as the rest, we give in the "How To Do Things" department this week, full directions that will, we believe, cover your wants. Rely upon it, we appreciate your kind sentiments.

I hope you will not object to a girl invading this department, but I want to say that I have been reading your ALL-SPORTS WEEKLY from No. 1 to date, and think them just splendid. I think Jack Lightfoot is just O. K., and must say that I wish there were more boys like him. But, oh, they are scarce. Although only a girl, I enjoy a game of baseball as well as my brothers, and they are cranks.

GENEVIVE RAYMOND.

Denver, Colo.

Thank you for your pleasant, breezy letter. We are always very glad to hear from the gentler sex, and we are also glad that you enjoy ALL-SPORTS and baseball so much.

We are certainly glad that there is such a publication as the ALL-SPORTS WEEKLY. We read it every week, and wish to thank you for publishing the best boys' journal to be found on any news stand. We hope they will be published for many years to come. Long live ALL-SPORTS WEEKLY, in all its glory!

FRED NEWBERRY,
RICHARD FOULKE.

Worcester, Mass.

Thank you for your kind and cheerful words and your good wishes. There is no doubt but you will be able to enjoy reading your favorite weekly for many years to come.

Wishing to let you know how I felt toward the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, I thought I would write a few lines. I have read all of the numbers but two, which I could not get. They are Nos. 13 and 18, and they were not sent to either of the book stores of Mansfield. Nearly every morning I get up at four o'clock and go out to the park, which is about a mile distant. We play ball, run around the park, and go in swimming. Those who do not get up early in the morning take a swim at five in the afternoon. There is a fine swimming pool at the park, which is owned by the morning walkers. It has a shute, two trapezes, two ropes, springing board and high ladder, besides some flying rings and a good shower bath. I have been in swimming twenty-eight times so far this year. A short time ago a man was drowned in this pool, and now we have a grappling hook, several ropes, and we have ordered some life preservers. I like all the members of ALL-SPORTS that are Jack's friends, except Lily Livingston. She doesn't seem to care what happens to Jack, but as soon as he finds something wrong about that "dude" Shelton, she comes around and begs for him to be forgiven. I think if Delancy was sent to jail for a while he'd have a little more sense. I would suggest that the applause column be lengthened out a couple of pages, as we like to read the letters.

I would like to give a few of my measurements and have you criticise them. My age is 14 years; height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 125 pounds; hips, 33 inches; waist, 27½ inches. Hoping this will not take up too much space, I remain, yours very truly,

WILLIAM F. BLACK.

490 West Park Avenue, Mansfield, Ohio.

You are a bit heavier than the average for your height, but we presume you must be in pretty good trim, judging from your sensible method of early rising in summer and your athletic training.

As I am a constant reader of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, I thought I would write a letter to the Chat column. I like Jack Light-

foot, Lafe Lampton and all the other characters, and am certainly glad you have opened the Chat column. I enjoy reading the advice on baseball. I like the baseball stories better than any. I would like some of the readers to write to me. I certainly will answer all letters. How much should an eighteen-year-old boy weigh that is five feet ten and one-half? Thanking you in advance for the information, I remain, yours truly,

P. O. Box 285, Pensacola, Fla.

B. J. GRIFFIN.

Something like one hundred and fifty-five pounds, if you are in good condition. Your opinion of our publication is of the right sort. We trust you gain considerable benefit, both morally and physically, by practicing such things as Jack excels in.

The ALL-SPORTS is, indeed, the boys and girls' "prince of weeklies." I suppose nearly all of the ALL-SPORTS readers are acquainted with the "king." This is no slur against the ALL-SPORTS, as the *Tip Top* has had nearly ten years of experience. Should the ALL-SPORTS be running nine or ten years from now, who can tell what will be the case? I've noticed, in Nos. 23 and 24 of ALL-SPORTS, that there were only twenty-seven pages. Give us more, publishers. When a good thing is cut off like that, it's time that we rise up and howl. Oh, yes, we know we're greedy, but can you blame us? Nixy. Jack Lightfoot and his cousin are my favorites, but Kirtland comes in for his share. Say, Mr. Editor, will you please ramble up to Mr. Stevens and ask him if he can't manage to have Kirt pitch a star game and win his own game, or else distinguish himself in some other way? Kirtland is a boy in whom the bad qualities are slightly more prominent, but who has much sterling worth beneath. A writer to the Chat suggested that Kate and Jack take a moonlight stroll by the lake. I got tired a long time ago of reading of moonlight scenes. Everything's so pretty, don't you know. "Moon kisses her golden hair; makes it seem like the finest silk; the hero is overcome; she seems like a goddess to him; the moon peeps through the trees; it goes behind a cloud; hero loses control of himself, and—" Fudge! When you shut your book you come down with a terrific thump from heaven to earth. Such scenes have been worked to death. Mr. Stevens knows what he's doing; so three cheers for him and the publishers.

Here are my measurements, Mr. Editor. Tell me my weak points. Age, 16 years; height, 5 feet 6½ inches; weight, 126 pounds; chest, normal, 32 inches; expanded, 35 inches; biceps, 10½ inches; calves, 14 inches; thighs, 20 inches; waist, 27 inches; hips, 33 inches; neck, 13½ inches. You will know me as, Terre Haute, Ind.

"NOTHING."

The stories are just as long as ever; indeed, we tried hard to have Mr. Stevens increase their length by one quarter; but he refused, lest his work must suffer. That he was honest in his opinion you can believe, since the compensation was to have been also liberally increased. We crowded in a page of "How To Do Things," which is really extra. As to your measurements, you are a trifle heavy, not enough to count; calves normal, ditto waist, but you lack several inches in chest. Work to enlarge your lung capacity.

Having read your "king of weeklies" up to date, No. 22, I write to send my warmest congratulations for it. "Jack is a corker," "can't be beat." Lafe and Tom are about even in my estimation. Nat, Ned and Jube are all right, but I hope Phil Kirtland will soon forget his snobbish ways and fight for Cranford and not for his own personal glory. If he does Brodie will follow him, I know, and those two cannot very well be spared from the team.

There is one kick I think is just, and it is that you have not enough about the girls in your weekly. I think Jack ought to have Nellie for his sweetheart. Kate is all right, but she has gone back on Jack so many times that I can't get to like her as I do Nellie.

Believing that all ALL-SPORTS readers think as I do, I have taken the liberty to make this request. Hoping to see this in print, and not in the wastebasket, I remain, A NELLIEITE.
San Francisco, Cal.

The day ALL-SPORTS arrives by mail is the happiest of all the whole week to me. Once it didn't get here, as something hap-

pened to the mail, and I never knew time to drag like it did then. When the mail arrived next day I was on hand watching like a hawk, and when I saw my beloved paper shoved into our box I felt like giving a shout. It came out as quick as it went in, I can tell you, Mr. Editor. I enjoy reading all the letters in your Chat pages, and hope to see this printed there. Jack Lightfoot is my ideal of a boy, and I am trying to pattern my life after him. I've quit smoking forever, and I feel that what little athletic training I've done has been more than good for me. I hope you continue to publish ALL-SPORTS for many years. It must help thousands of boys to start right, and leave off habits that could only be injurious to their health. Is 123 pounds a fair weight for a boy of fifteen, 5 feet 5½ inches tall?

Daytona, Fla.

A JOLLY READER.

Your weight is very nearly the right thing, which in itself goes far toward proving that you are leading the proper kind of life. You have a charming town, too. The editor spent half a year there, and fished from the long bridges across the Halifax. We are glad you have been benefited in all ways by reading of Jack Lightfoot's trials and victories. Indeed, no boy who thinks at all could read these stories without realizing how necessary it is for a lad to keep a clean mind in a clean body. Write again, Jolly Reader.

I will write a few lines, telling you what I think of your ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. I have read all the numbers since No. 1, and like the characters very well. I think Jack Lightfoot is a very good friend of mine, even if I have never seen him in the flesh. Reel and Delancy are villains of the worst sort. Rex is a "bird" of a mascot. Wishing to have this letter appear soon in the applause column, I will close,
C. E. A.
Defiance, Ohio.

Thank you. Your letter is short and to the point. When a lad takes the trouble to write his opinion of his favorite paper, we can only take it as a most sincere compliment. We hope you are not keeping the pleasure all to yourself, but sounding the praises of ALL-SPORTS among your friends. We have a mission to carry out among the boys of America, and the greater our audience the more successfully shall we be enabled to spread the gospel of clean minds and athletic bodies. You can best help us by getting your friends interested in the publication that stands for everything that is good and healthy for the coming men of our country.

It seems to me that the readers of ALL-SPORTS have acted kind of queer. So far as I've seen, not one has ever stood up and thanked you, Mr. Publisher, for giving us the new department, "How To Do Things." Now, for one, I've found it both interesting and useful, and I guess every boy that plays ball and reads about Lightfoot has profited in some way from the articles on how to play the various positions on the diamond. Say, some of those essays were peaches and cream to me, and you can just depend on it I've played better ball this year than ever before in all my life, and I can see, too, how there may be some mighty interesting reading yet to come in this same page. We all want to know "how to do things," and I look forward to getting a lot of interesting information from that quarter. I suppose you intend to take up football in season, and tell us just how the different positions should be played in a way to win. Well, this letter is getting long, and if I hope to have it escape the wastebasket, I guess I'd better quit. Give my regards to the author of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and also hoping the Winner Library Company may always meet with success, I remain, your friend,
ROBERT G. SHAW.

Wilkesbarre, Pa.

Glad you appreciate our efforts, Robert, in opening the new department. We have a multitude of good things which are awaiting their turn, and which we feel sure will interest you. Some of our readers seem to imagine the story has been made shorter, but such is not the case; only the lines had to be condensed a little in order to give us this page for "How To Do Things."

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Just at present baseball is the topic in hand, and instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch." (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch." (II.) No. 26, "How to Run Bases." No. 27, "Coaching and the Coach." No. 28, "How to Umpire." No. 29, "How to Manage Players." No. 30, "Baseball Points." No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff."

ARCHERY.

From earliest times the bow and arrow have occupied an important part in the development of a country's greatness. Thus, we see, the English in the Middle Ages excelled in the use of the strong-bow, and archery was an important factor in the victories of the English troops. Particularly was this so in the battle of Hastings.

Notices of archery are of frequent occurrence throughout Jewish history, more particularly in the histories of the wars of this people; and from other sources also, as from Josephus we learn that the use of the bow throughout the Holy Land was very general, it being considered the most effective weapon then known. The archery of Jonathan is specially referred to in Holy Writ, and the bow and arrow was then, as indeed down to the time of the employment of gunpowder in warfare, used against an enemy in all stages of civilization.

Of the deadly feats of the bow, history offers numerous curious instances. Cephalus mistook his wife for a wild beast and shot her. Hercules discharged his arrow with deadly aim against Nessus for attempting to run away with his wife, Dejanira. Achilles received his death wound from an arrow shot by Paris, the son of old Priam. Ulysses also slew the suitors of Penelope with the bow that had hung so long on the walls of his home, and which no one could string but himself.

Then again, how delightful are the tales of Robin Hood and his merry men, in which the long bow plays so important a part.

"A famous man is Robin Hood,
The English ballad-singer's joy."

The depths of Sherwood Forest saw many a famous feat with the bow in the hands of Robin and his stanch followers.

The discovery of every new country has found the inhabitants in possession of the bow and arrow. Columbus found it in America, Vasco de Gama in India, and, in more recent times, the various explorers in Africa discovered each tribe in possession of the bow and arrow.

In our own country, the various tribes of Indians who once roamed over the Western plains, were very proficient in the use of the bow and arrow, it being their chief weapon of defense, and also used by them when engaged in the chase. Some of the braves were so proficient in its use they could send a feathered shaft with such force that it would go straight through the body of a deer.

To come down to recent history, when the United

States troops first met the Filipinos in battle, a band of Igorrote warriors met our boys in khaki with a shower of arrows, believing that they were superior to the rifles of the hated Americanos. Needless to say, that was a time when the bow and arrow were of little service and a trifle behind the times.

It is entirely beyond the scope of this article to illustrate the changes and variations characteristic of archery in every age. Consequently we will have to be content with treating the game of the present day and offering some hints as to the best method of becoming an expert in the pastime.

In advising the choice of a bow many points have to be taken into consideration; if, as is usually the case, the advice is required for a beginner, the weight which can be *properly commanded* should be the first consideration. The weight of a bow should be that which the shooter can thoroughly command during the operation of drawing, holding and loosing, and, as this last is the most delicate operation of the three, as well as the most difficult and important, so it is the power of loosing which should regulate the weight of the bow chosen.

All bows require to be treated with care. After shooting on a damp day both the bow and the string should be thoroughly rubbed dry with a soft rag, especially at the ends and handle, where the damp is likely to settle. The string should be rubbed with beeswax, and the bow should not be placed in a case, or if it is necessary to do so to take it home, it should be taken out and again wiped as soon as possible.

When the editor was a lad boys usually made their own bows and arrows; but nowadays the manufacturers place such splendid material on the market that it is almost as absurd to think of whittling out a hickory bow as of trying to make a baseball bat. The same applies to arrows, quiver and other things connected with the game.

There is always a certain amount of temptation to shoot with lighter arrows at one hundred yards than at the shorter distances, so as to get the lower point of aim, to which some archers give way. Some, also, have shot with heavier arrows at one end than at the other, so as to try to neutralize the effect of an up and down wind. The difference of elevation gained by changing the weight of the arrows is hardly sufficient to counterbalance the inconvenience of having to take about with one double the number of arrows, and the danger of using, on some critical occasion, the wrong or mixed lot of arrows.

The pleasures of archery, like canoeing, can only be fully realized by those who have enjoyed them to their full limit. And, naturally, as the good yew bow and feathered shaft of Robin Hood's day always bore an intimate connection with the leafy arches of Sherwood Forest, so to-day a love for the woods must abide with everyone who desires to realize all that is best in archery. Game may not reward the hunter's quest, or fall to the arrows he discharges with so much zeal, but if he only keeps eyes and ears on the alert, he will hear and see a thousand things calculated to make him better acquainted with nature, and the habits of the feathered and furred denizens of the forest.

By all means, indulge in the delightful game of archery if you possess any yearning toward nature's heart, for such a recreation is bound to enlarge your views, as well as increase your knowledge.

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